

**THE ISSUE OF CULTURE IN EFL LESSONS IN BRAZIL:  
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INVESTIGATION**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an ethnographic enquiry into the question of culture in the content of EFL lessons. It focuses on day-to-day classroom practice in a Brazilian school for a critical examination of a truism in the language teaching profession: that culture is an integral part of the content of language lessons. Inspired by Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) '*dialogism*', this thesis conceptualizes syllabus content as *multivoiced discourse* which is shaped by teachers and learners as they "assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate" words of others (cf. Bakhtin 1986:89) in the classroom.

Its two-part structure reflects the attempt to construct my own critical voice by building both on the data and on the theoretical voices on the topic. Hence, Part One contextualizes the research within its subject area and considers the main ideas (on culture, foreign language education, and classroom research) providing the theoretical basis for the investigation. Chapter 1 considers the context, topic, scope and relevance of the research and provides an outline of the organization of the entire thesis. Chapter 2 examines the various definitions and uses of the word 'culture' in circulation in language teaching literature over time against the background of the development of the concept in the social sciences. Chapter 3 gives careful consideration to the principles of ethnography guiding this investigation.

In Part Two the ethnographic voice takes the lead to narrate and interpret the documentary, interview, and observational material. Chapter 4 considers the research design as related to the context and purposes of the investigation. The analysis of the data developed through chapters 5-8 relates the views of culture - and cultural content - expressed by teachers and pupils, as well as those identified in the textbooks and other school documents, to the content which emerges out of classroom activities. The thesis concludes with an assessment of the contribution it may be able to make to the examination and understanding of foreign language classroom realities.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

**C7** - Class 7

**C11** - Class 11

**CCCS** - Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

**DOC.** - Document

**ELT** - English Language Teaching

**EFL** - English as a Foreign Language

**ESL** - English as a Second Language

**ESOL** - English for Speakers of Other Languages

**FL** - Foreign Language

**L1** - Native Language

**L2** - Second or Foreign Language

**SLA** - Second Language Acquisition

## TEXTBOOKS

**NW** - *New Wave* (textbook)

**TRB** - Teacher's Resource Book (*New Wave*)

**HW** - *Headway* (textbook)

**TB** - Teacher's Book (*Headway*)

## BRAZILIAN REFERENCES

**CFE** - Federal Education Council

**MEC** - Ministry of Education and Culture

**RJ** - Rio de Janeiro State

**SEEC** - Secretary of State for Education and Culture



## PART ONE: TAKING BEARINGS

### Chapter 1

#### Introduction

##### 1.1 Stating the problem

This thesis is about an aspect of foreign language education and it has been motivated by the need to gain some more understanding about the complexities of classroom realities in the context of foreign language education in Brazil. It has also been motivated by my interest in addressing an issue which has provoked more embarrassment and controversy in certain language teaching quarters than it has raised critical attention. The overall aim of this thesis is thus to ‘problematize’ the question of culture as related to foreign language instruction. In particular, this thesis aims to investigate day-to-day classroom practice to find out what is made of the assumption that culture is an integral part of the content of foreign language lessons.

As Stern (1992:205) points out, "there is no question that culture, at least on paper, forms part of most language curriculums". Whatever it is called - ‘civilisation’ in France, ‘Kulturkunde’ or ‘Landeskunde’ in Germany, ‘background studies’ in Britain - and regardless of its ambiguous and problematic status in some circles, there is evidence of a continuing history of this aspect of language teaching dating back to the beginning of the century (Cf. Jespersen 1904, cited in Rivers 1968/1981:314; Stern 1983: chapter 12, 1992: chapter 8; Byram 1988, 1989, *inter alia*). It is also a history of discrepancy between repeated high-flown statements of faith in the educational benefits of language-and-culture learning and rare significant attempts to treat culture

systematically in language classes. It would be fair to say that while paying lip-service to the pursuit of appreciation of diversity, mainstream language teaching has often tended to treat culture as a homogeneous phenomenon which bears a one-to-one correspondence with other monolithic notions such as 'nation' and '(foreign) language'. The fact is that to this date the assertion that culture is "taught and learnt, both overtly and implicitly, both consciously and incidentally" in the language class (cf. Byram 1989:37) remains a truism in the profession, and one which requires urgent examination.

This critical examination is all the more relevant at a time when - largely prompted by changes in the international geopolitical scene and by the growing realization among language teachers that there is more to language education than training monocultural global villagers into linguistic skills - there are signs of a revival of interest in the cultural content of language teaching. They are less explicit under the various guises of 'communicative' teaching and its concern with the 'rules of use' (cf. Hymes 1971) and the development of sociocultural competence (cf. Canale and Swain 1980); or they may be overtly stated, as for example, in the writings of the modern advocates of culture teaching (e.g. Byram 1986, 1988, 1989, 1990b; Kramsch 1993). It seems to me that in many cases such renewed concern with culture attests to the need to rescue foreign language teaching from the cultural blandness and trivial content which so often passes for 'communicative' teaching<sup>1</sup> and thus recover its educational dimension.

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<sup>1</sup>I would venture to suggest that as a result of banning pedagogy from the classroom in the name of a focus on linguistic creativity, or on language as 'communication' - mistakenly conceived as aural-oral 'interaction' - foreign language teaching in Brazil and elsewhere has rendered itself contentless. At best, it is now a discipline in a Pirandellian search of subject-matter/content (cf. Luigi Pirandello's [1921] *Sei Personaggi in Cerca d'Autore/Six Characters in Search of an Author*).



In Brazilian curricular documents, references to this educational dimension of the language learning experience echo traditional arguments in the profession for the inclusion of foreign languages in the school curriculum. For instance, the educational value of learning a foreign language would lie in its potential to "broaden the learners' cultural horizons" and "promote understanding and respect for the cultural identity and value of others". As has been pointed out in the literature (Widdowson 1988; Byram 1989, for example), besides resting on the belief that language learning is the 'natural antidote' to ethnocentrism, such statements are also based on the assumption that you cannot learn a language without learning a culture or, in a weaker version, that "language cannot be separated completely from the culture in which it is deeply embedded" (Rivers 1968/1981:315).

Such belief in the cultural embedment of language has left its imprint in language teaching over time in a way which characterizes what will be here referred to as *the culture-bound orientation*. Notwithstanding its varying status at different stages of language teaching history in different countries, this culture-bound orientation cannot be simply dismissed as another instance of misinformed practice or considered a source of embarrassment in the profession. Instead, it should be regarded as a valuable entry-point for research into the complexities of language classroom processes.

In fact, the general question behind such orientation concerns the nature of the relationship between the diversity in languages and diversity of thought and culture. This issue has in fact constituted a challenge for scholars for over a century and was most strongly addressed by Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956) in the formulations of what is known as the Whorfian hypothesis or the principle of linguistic relativity (cf. Lakoff



1987, chapter 18 for an appraisal of the historical status of Whorf's views). In a curious way, relativist approaches to the language and culture connection seem to have an everlasting resonance in the folk theories about language and culture which underlie classroom practice. Although Whorf's views and relativism in general are assumed to have been discredited in many circles (Pinker 1992), it might be fair to say that the issue of diversity in languages and cultures is still perceived by the profession as pedagogically more relevant than, for example, the search for universals. This is not to suggest that the recognition of cultural and linguistic variations should preclude the acceptance of universals; nor is it assumed here that language teaching pedagogy should be quick to respond to changes in theory, for that matter. In fact, I do not see why classroom practice should resonate theoretical findings at all - at least not until theory and research take account of what teachers and learners identify as relevant to their classroom experience (cf. Widdowson 1984: Section One, for example). It seems to me, though, that what characterizes the culture-bound orientation is not any particular underlying view of the nature of diversity in language and culture but rather the general assumption that whatever the language and culture connection may be, it seems strong enough to make culture a necessary part of language teaching.

It is also possible to identify a second, more recent, orientation in the way the language teaching profession regards the role of culture teaching in general language education. In fact, what characterizes this strand, which I shall call *the ideology-bound orientation*, is a shift of focus from the culture-language to the ideology-language interface as found, for example, in fairly recent papers by Auerbach (1986), Auerbach and Burgess (1985), Pennycook (1989), Peirce (1989), and Benesch (1993). These writers draw on critical educational theory (e.g. Freire 1970, 1973; Bourdieu and

Passeron 1977; Apple 1979; Giroux 1983, 1989) and, to a lesser extent, on critical discourse analysis, or ‘critical linguistics’ (e.g. Fowler et al. 1979; Kress and Hodge 1979) to take an openly political stance towards foreign/second language education and challenge the notion that some forms of teaching are safely apolitical (particularly ESP and other brands of communicative EFL teaching) whereas other types are dangerously ideological (particularly those which have ‘culture’ on the agenda). As with ‘critical linguistics’, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that languages embody particular world-views is here (e.g. Dendrinos 1992) extended to varieties within a language and teaching texts/discourses are taken to embody particular ideologies and theories (cf. Fairclough 1992:26).

The third orientation in this debate is characterized by an explicit concern with the educational dimension of foreign language teaching, and can thus be called *the culture-as-education orientation*. In fact, it overlaps somehow with the other two orientations identified above in that it is also concerned both with the culture-language interface and the political dimension of the teaching activity. It is distinct from the other two, however, in its concern with the provision of a theoretical base for the teaching of culture, as attested by the work of two forceful representatives of such orientation - i.e. Byram (1986, 1988, 1989, 1990a, 1990b) and Kramsch (1993). In so doing, these writers keep a safe distance from the reductionism which is in my view endemic to the culture-ideology-language debate in FL teaching.

Underlying this debate are rather different understandings of ‘culture’, ‘ideology’, and the related issue of reproduction and transformation in educational settings. To find out in what manner and to what degree such different perspectives



resonate in the classroom and help to shape the EFL syllabus is part of the main concern of this thesis.

As stated above, this research will focus on day-to-day classroom practice in a Brazilian school for a critical examination of the assumption that ‘culture’ is an integral part of the content of foreign language lessons. Perhaps tautologically, it is assumed in this thesis that a more accurate picture of classroom phenomena can be obtained if the classroom is approached as a culture in its own right (cf. Breen 1985b: 142). For methodological reasons, an initial working definition of culture is needed at this point. By culture I mean "not an undifferentiated system that serves to integrate society (...) but a region of serious contest and conflict over meaning" (Agger 1992:9); not a stable, self-contained, homogeneous state, but a dynamic, multifaceted, complex process. As an educational culture, the classroom is here regarded as the privileged locus for existing teaching plans to be reinterpreted, altered, and reconstructed (cf. Breen 1984 *inter alia*) in this interplay of resistance and conformity which seems to disrupt training but to characterize the educational process.

Hence, the focus of the enquiry will be on content *in progress* and not on content as the realization of a pre-specified scheme of work for a particular class. That is, no attempt will be made to start from a well-rounded definition of ‘cultural content’, and proceed to investigate the amount of fit between that and classroom practice. Instead, adequate methodological procedures will ensure that teachers’ and learners’ perspectives are taken into account and that their general concept of culture as well as their views of what might constitute the content - cultural or other - of their lessons are systematically incorporated into the research process together with the researcher’s own ‘theories’/interpretations.



To that end I shall take a *dialogic* (cf. Bakhtin 1981, 1986) perspective on language - and by extension on education and research - and an ethnographic route of investigation. Since such route should by no means preclude theory it is now necessary to make what may seem a lengthy digression in order to clarify the Bakhtinian voices which have provided this investigation with its theoretical starting point.

## 1.2 A Bakhtinian starting point

The *dialogic* perspective in this thesis is inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin's "account of relations between people and between persons and things that cuts across religious, political, and aesthetic boundaries" (Clark and Holquist 1984:348). To say that Bakhtin is here used as a source of theoretical inspiration - rather than for straightforward 'appropriation' - is to recognize the difficulties posed for readers (and writers) by a theorist who 'always sought the minimum degree of homogenization necessary to any conceptual scheme' (Ibid. p. 5). This is also to recognize the existence of a comprehensive Bakhtin throughout his various topics, disguises, and voices without however trying "to 'monologize' the singer of 'polyphony'"<sup>4</sup> (Ibid. p. 4). Besides, in an attempt to understand Bakhtin by using his own categories, I shall consider his texts as "the focal point for heteroglot voices among which [my] own voice must also sound" (Bakhtin 1981:278).

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<sup>4</sup>I take the view - following Clark and Holquist (1984, Chapter 6) - that Bakhtin was the author of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, published under the name of Valentin Volosinov, even though I do not share Clark and Holquist's reading of what should constitute 'Marxism' in the so-called 'disputed texts' (which include *Freudianism: A Critical Essay*, and *The Formal Method of Literary Scholarship*, published under the names of V. Volosinov, and Pavel Medvedev, respectively).



## Bakhtin's 'dialogism'

In what follows, no attempts will be made to provide a comprehensive review of Bakhtin's work<sup>5</sup>. Instead, I shall restrict the discussion to outlining some of the interconnected concepts dominating Bakhtin's *dialogism* - a term used by Holquist as a "synthetic means ... for categorizing the different ways [Bakhtin] meditated on dialogue" (Holquist 1990:15).

Clark and Holquist (1984:9) note that "the key feature of Bakhtin's thought is its attempt to comprehend the complex factors that make dialogue possible". Dialogue is understood not merely in the obvious sense of two people conversing but it is more comprehensively conceived by Bakhtin as follows:

*Dialogue, in the narrow sense of the word, is...only one of the forms - a very important form, to be sure - of verbal interaction. But dialogue can also be understood in a broader sense, meaning not only direct, face-to-face, vocalized verbal communication between persons, but also verbal communication of any type whatsoever. (1973:95)*

Morson and Emerson (1989:52-3) distinguish two senses in Bakhtin's use of the term 'dialogue':

*In one, all language is said to be necessarily dialogic: it orients itself towards a listener, whose active response shapes the utterance from the outset. 'Outsideness' always lies within the utterance, not just without. In this sense of dialogue, there can be no nondialogic language. The second sense of 'dialogue' does admit of both dialogic and nondialogic (or monologic) uses of language. Some utterances exploit the dialogic resources of language to the fullest, and derive their power and interest by dramatizing as complexly as possible the play of voices and contexts enabling speech or writing as social acts [e.g. the novel, especially the novels of Dostoevsky]. But other forms of speech and writing derive their interest and power from the attempt... to 'forget' the multiple dialogizing qualifications beyond the utterance - to speak, as it were, from outside the historical and social realm in a 'utopian' language [e.g. lyric poetry].*

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<sup>5</sup>Clark and Holquist 1984, Holquist 1990, Morson and Emerson (eds.) 1989, and Morris (ed.) 1994 provide thorough reviews of Bakhtin's work.



Indeed, as Clark and Holquist (1984:9,10,7) point out, Bakhtin's 'dialogue' "means communication between simultaneous differences" - "not a dialectical either/or, but a dialogic both/and". They believe that Bakhtin's concern with differences - also a major preoccupation of modern philosophical thought - is characterized by "his concentration on the possibility of encompassing differences in simultaneity", identified as the larger category behind others, such as 'polyphony', 'social diversity', and 'heteroglossia'<sup>6</sup>. The old problem of identity - they note - is thus conceived by Bakhtin "along the lines not of 'the same as' but of 'simultaneous with'". As Clark and Holquist go on to say, Bakhtin's term for the activity that is able to comprehend the interaction of disparate energies simultaneously is the *utterance*, "the basic building block in his dialogic conception of language" and society.

### **Utterance: the unit of speech communication**

For Bakhtin (1986:71), *utterance* is "the *real unit* of speech communication". He wrote that "speech can exist in reality only in the form of concrete utterances of individual speaking people, speech subjects. Speech is always cast in the form of an utterance belonging to a particular speaking subject, and outside this form it cannot exist".

Clark and Holquist (1984:216) view the Bakhtinian utterance as:

*(...) the fundamental unit of investigation for anyone studying communication, as opposed to just language [as in Saussurean linguistics]. [It is his] covering term for a situation whose duality had been obscured by the unitizing assumption that speaking and listening were exclusive and integral activities. [Moreover], Bakhtin argues that when people use language, they do so not as machines sending and transmitting codes, but as consciousnesses engaging in simultaneous understandings.*

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<sup>6</sup>Cf. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984 [1929, rev. 1963] ), for 'polyphony'; *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1973 [1929] ), for 'social diversity', and *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981 [1934] ), for 'heteroglossia'.



Bakhtin (1986:91) affirms that:

*Any concrete utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication (...) Utterances are not indifferent to one another, and are not self-sufficient; they are aware of and mutually reflect one another (...) Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality of speech communication. Every utterance must be regarded primarily as a response to preceding utterances of the given sphere (we understand the word 'response' here in the broadest sense).*

### **The notion of 'addressivity'**

Bakhtin views the utterance as "a moment in the continuous process of verbal communication" - which, in turn is only "a moment in the generative process of a given social collective" (1973:95). The utterance is thus characterized by "an orientation toward the addressee", to the extent that it is "determined equally by whose word it is and *for whom* it is meant" (1973: 87, and 86).

Furthermore, Bakhtin did not limit the notion of addressee to only those speakers in the immediate speech situation. Instead, the voice or voices to which an utterance is addressed may be temporarily, spatially, and socially distant:

*This addressee can be an immediate participant-interlocutor in an everyday dialogue, a differentiated collective of specialists in some particular area of cultural communication, a more or less differentiated public, ethnic group, contemporaries, like-minded people, opponents and enemies, a subordinate, a superior, someone who is lower, higher, familiar, foreign, and so forth. And it can also be an indefinite, unconcretized other. (1986:95)*

### **The notion of 'voice' and the social context of meaning**

Central to the concept of utterance - and to Bakhtin's dialogism - is the notion of 'voice', "and of the voices within voices which are found within certain kinds of utterance (especially reported speech) and within certain kinds of discourse such as parody, carnival, and the novel (as Bakhtin broadly defined them)" (Cook 1991:152).

In Emerson and Holquist's gloss, voice is "the speaking personality, the speaking



consciousness. A voice always has a will or desire behind it, its own timbre and overtones" [Holquist (ed.) 1981:434]. It does not follow, however, that Bakhtin locates language in the individual mind alone or that 'voice' is a psychological phenomenon or cognitive concept. In fact, since Bakhtin grounds meaning in the social, he argues that "my voice can mean, but only with others - at times in chorus, but at the best of times in dialogue" (Clark and Holquist 1984:12). Though Bakhtin "roots meaning in the social (...) the social is conceived in a special way", as Clark and Holquist promptly observe. To illustrate their point they draw attention to the way Bakhtin's dialogic conception of language differs from two other current views of language, namely 'Personalist' (associated with Wilhelm Wundt, Karl Vossler, and Benedetto Croce), and 'Deconstructionist' [cf. Derrida's *différance*]:

*The Personalist view assumes that we can, by speaking, appropriate to our own use the impersonal structure of language, which is 'always already there'. The breadth of our life is the material of words; our voice weds us to language. The second view goes to the opposite extreme: the human voice is conceived merely as another means for registering differences, one that is not necessarily privileged.*

(Clark and Holquist 1984:12)

For Bakhtin - as Clark and Holquist put it - "meaning comes about not as the lonely product of an intention willed by a sovereign ego. Nor is meaning ultimately impossible to achieve because of the arbitrary play of a mysterious force called 'difference'" (ibid.). As Cook (1994:157) aptly sums up:

*Bakhtin, presaging later pragmatic views of communication, sees meaning as a combination of the code and the context, actively constructed by the receiver. For Bakhtin individual thought and identity are never separate from either language or the other - the receiver - who is essential to the utterance. Thought is not something inside the head to be transmitted, but something which comes into being as the individual enters this external physical world of language already socially imbued with meaning. Individual identity is not 'in' the brain-and-body of an individual, but is the interaction of the brain-and-body with this external semiotic system and with others. Even in inner*



*speech we always address an other. Our identity is literally outside ourselves.*

In Bakhtin's own words:

*(...) the unique speech experience of each individual is shaped and developed in continuous and constant interaction with others' individual utterances. This experience can be characterized to some degree as the process of assimilation - more or less creative - of others' words (and not the words of a language). Our speech, that is, all our utterances (including creative works), is filled with others' words, varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate. (Bakhtin 1986:89)*

Thus, meaning in his view "belongs to a word in its position between speakers (...). meaning is realized only in the process of active, responsive understanding. [It] is not in the word or in the soul of the speaker or in the soul of the listener. Meaning is the effect of interaction between speaker and listener produced via the material of a particular sound complex" (1973:102-3).

It should be noted that this focus on the dialogic utterance does not mean that Bakhtin ignored the role of the systematic aspects of language:

*The determining role of the other in speech communication shows not only that there is a system of language outside of any particular articulation of language but also that there is a system governing my actual utterance. (Clark and Holquist 1984:217)*

According to Holquist (1990:60-1), "before it means any specific thing, an utterance expresses the general conditions of each speaker's *addressivity*, the situation of not only being preceded by a language system (...) but preceded as well by all of existence, making it necessary for me to answer for the particular place that I occupy". In other words, addressivity is "the otherness of language in general and of given dialogic partners in particular" (Clark and Holquist 1984:217).



Thus, as Holquist (1990:59) goes on to say, "the Bakhtinian utterance is dialogic precisely in the degree to which *every aspect* of it is a give-and-take between the local need of a particular speaker to communicate a specific meaning, and the global requirements of language as a generalizing system". Moreover, to conceive of language as essentially dialogic is to place the utterance somewhere in between the systematic aspects of language and speech, which - in Bakhtin's terms - is "the social event of verbal interaction (1973:94). Clark and Holquist (1984:13) note that "this 'in betweenness' suggests not only meaning's need always to be shared but also the degree to which multiplicity and struggle characterize Bakhtin's heteroglot view of language".

### **The notion of 'heteroglossia'**

Bakhtin's *heteroglossia* is the locus where "the processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance". He insists that all utterances are heteroglot in that they answer the requirements for inclusion in the 'normative-centralizing system of a unitary language' but they are also active participants in the surrounding diversity of the social context:

*(...) Every utterance participates in the unitary language' [in its centripetal forces and tendencies] and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia [the centrifugal, stratifying forces]. Such is the fleeting language of a day, of an epoch, a social group, a genre, a school and so forth. It is possible to give a concrete and detailed analysis of any utterance, once having exposed it as a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies in the life of language.*

*The authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogized heteroglossia, anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accented as an individual utterance. (Bakhtin 1981:272)*

In summary, "dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as part of a greater



whole - there is constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others" (ibid. p. 426).

### **The words of others: assimilation and appropriation**

In a world where language is 'heteroglot opinion', where "the word in language is half someone else's" - the process of selectively assimilating the words of others takes on a particular significance (ibid. p. 293). Moreover, to conceive of language as essentially dialogue requires an explanation to "the question of how much of the other's meaning I will permit to get through when I surround his words with my own, [and that] is a question about the governance of meaning, about who presides over it, and about how much of it is shared" (Clark and Holquist 1984:236).

Bakhtin addresses this question in detail when he examines the problem of 'reported speech' (literally 'speech of the other', in Russian). For Bakhtin (1973:115), reported speech is "speech within speech, utterance within utterance, and at the same time also *speech about speech, utterance about utterance*". Congenial with the view of education informing this thesis - is the way Bakhtin explores the related issue of the process of 'ideological becoming', through the dialogic relationship between *authoritative discourse* and *internally persuasive discourse*.

In Bakhtin's (1981) view, the process of 'ideological becoming' is "the process of selectively assimilating the words of others". He argues that one of the modes used in school for the simultaneous appropriation and transmission of 'another's words' is 'retelling in one's own words' and that "[this mode] is to a certain extent a double-voiced narration of another's words, for indeed 'one's own words' must not completely dilute the quality that makes another's words unique". More importantly, he believes that an individual's coming into consciousness is characterized by the



struggle and dialogic interrelationship of two categories of ideological discourse which he calls *authoritative discourse*, and *internally persuasive discourse* (ibid. pp. 341-2). The first 'demands our unconditional allegiance', whereas the latter is persuasive 'from within'. The authoritative word is by nature 'incapable of being double-voiced' (ibid. p. 344) and allows no interanimation with other voices. Internally persuasive discourse, on the other hand, is "half-ours and half-someone else's [and] enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts" (Ibid. p. 346). Besides, while the authoritative discourse "permits no play with ... its borders, (...) no spontaneously creative stylizing variants on it", the open semantic structure of an internally persuasive discourse is "able to reveal ever new *ways to mean*" (Ibid. pp. 345-6).

Examples of the authoritative word are 'the word of a father, of adults, and of teachers', and Bakhtin affirms that 'we encounter it with its authority already fused to it': "It is indissolubly fused with its authority - with political power, an institution, a person - and it stands and falls together with that authority" (Ibid. p. 343). By contrast, internally persuasive discourse is backed up by no authority at all and it is "not acknowledged by public opinion, nor by scholarly norms, nor by criticism" (Ibid. p. 342).

Throughout his account of authoritative discourse, Bakhtin emphasizes its uniqueness as "a concrete means for formulating itself during transmission", which takes place outside the 'zone of contact' with other discourses:

*Authoritative discourse may organize around itself great masses of other types of discourses (which interpret it, praise it, apply it in various ways), but the authoritative discourse itself does not merge with these...; it remains sharply demarcated, compact and inert: it demands, so to speak, not only quotation marks but a demarcation even more magisterial, a special script, for instance. (Ibid. p. 343)*

Therefore, "authoritative discourse can not be represented - it is only transmitted", whereas internally persuasive discourse is "affirmed through assimilation [as it is] tightly interwoven with one's own words" (ibid. p. 344, 345).

For Bakhtin, our ideological development, our coming to consciousness, is thus an intense interaction and struggle between one's own and another's voice - a process which is waged within the arena of the utterance. And that - in Bakhtin's terms - is 'the image of a language' (1981:354). It is also, I believe, an illuminating metaphor of the educational process.

Inspired by Bakhtin's '*dialogism*', this thesis will thus conceptualize syllabus content - cultural or other - as *multivoiced discourse* which is ideally shaped by teachers and learners as they "assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate" words of others (cf. Bakhtin 1986:89) in the classroom. Thus conceived, the foreign language syllabus is a potential instance of polyphony of diverse social and discursive voices and it should resonate not only with the voices of members of the immediate classroom culture, i.e. teacher, pupils, and textbook, but also with voices coming from the local educational and EFL cultures. However, a dialogic perspective should be at once sensitive to the multiplicity and struggle which take place in the classroom and which may or may not result in 'communication between simultaneous differences' (Clark and Holquist 1984:9). That is, I intend to approach the classroom-as-culture with an ear to the multiplicity of voices which populate it but without losing sight of the possibility of encountering an instructional discourse which is pedagogically *monological* i.e. one in which polyphony might be replaced by a cacophony of disparate voices, unable to reveal 'new ways to mean' (cf. Bakhtin 1981:346, emphasis in the original) or to have any educational resonance.



It is now time to provide a brief account of the ethnographic route taken in this research, a route which is here seen as the methodological counterpart to the dialogic perspective inspiring this thesis.

### 1.3 An ethnographic route

The option for ethnography as a research method can be justified on several counts, not least for the knowledge it has accumulated into ways of probing unknown cultures, and - in the case of the ethnography of schooling - for its knowledge of ways of "making the familiar strange and interesting again" (Erickson 1985:121)<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, ethnography offers a systematic means of gaining understanding of 'multiple-constructed realities' (Lincoln and Guba 1985:37) through a process of description/interpretation which attempts to incorporate "what sociocultural knowledge participants bring to and generate in the social setting being studied" (Spindler 1982:7).

A detailed discussion of the principles of ethnography informing this thesis will be taken up in chapter 3. For the moment, it is sufficient to note that in an attempt to keep away from "conventional ethnographic practice founded on naive realism" without lapsing into the "self-refuting character of relativism" (Hammersley 1992:49, 54) every effort has been made to ensure that this study should be accompanied by a concern with principles and method. Drawing primarily on Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), this thesis will exploit the potentiality of ethnography as a rigorous

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<sup>7</sup>"Making the familiar strange": G. Spindler notes that Erickson (1973) "is the first to apply this phrase specifically to the problems encountered in doing the ethnography of schooling" (Spindler (ed.) 1982:15).

research method while recognizing that it is part of the social world it studies<sup>8</sup>. Such a view of social research as a 'reflexive process' implies, as Hammersley points out elsewhere (1992:54), "an abandonment of the ideal of reproduction [of reality] in favour of selective representation. Given that what is produced is, at best, only one of many possible valid accounts of the phenomena studied, it is a requirement that ethnographers explicit the relevances on which their accounts are based".

This thesis will thus take an ethnographic route to turn the initial research problem into a set of questions to which a theoretical answer can be given. It is hoped that this answer will move beyond the descriptive level to gain a theoretical formulation which may contribute to diminishing the gap between academic thought and EFL classroom practice.

#### **1.4 A dialogic organization**

The two-part structure of the thesis reflects the attempt to construct my own critical voice by building both on the data and on the theoretical voices on the topic. Hence, Part One contextualizes the research within its subject area and considers the main ideas (on culture, foreign language education, and classroom research) providing the theoretical basis for the investigation. Stemming from the dialogic perspective outlined in this first chapter is the need for the study to be sensitive to the multiplicity of voices which populate the classroom and, in particular, to the wide range of meanings which 'culture' takes on in the day-to-day classroom practice. Hence, Chapter 2 considers the various definitions and uses of the word in language teaching literature over time against the background of the development of the concept in the social

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<sup>8</sup>Cf. Hammersley and Atkinson's (1983) principle of 'reflexivity'; also section 3.2.2 below.



sciences and in the area of ‘cultural studies’ in particular. Chapter 3 gives careful consideration to the principles of ethnography guiding this investigation.

In Part Two the ethnographic voice takes the lead to narrate and interpret the documentary, interview, and observational material gathered throughout one semester in a Brazilian school. This second part also resonates with other theoretical voices which have been added to Bakhtin’s whenever required by the analytical process. Chapter 4 considers the research design as related to the context and purposes of the investigation. The analysis of the data developed through chapters 5-8 relates the views of culture - and cultural content - expressed by teachers and pupils (Chapter 6), as well as those identified in the textbooks and other school documents (Chapters 5 and 7), to the content which emerges out of classroom activities (Chapter 8). The thesis concludes (Chapter 9) with an assessment of the contribution it may be able to make to the examination and understanding of foreign language classroom practices.

## Chapter 2

### Culture, Language, and Foreign Language Education

#### 2.1 Culture and Cultures

Any attempt at identifying what is currently meant by ‘culture’ in language teaching pedagogy in Brazil or elsewhere will reveal variations of use of the word which are also evident in the literature of the history of language teaching. In fact, *culture* is a notoriously difficult word, with a complex and still active history, as Raymond Williams (1976:87) points out:

*Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. This is partly because of its intricate historical development, in several European languages, but mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought.*

The lack of a well-established definition of *culture* within the social sciences has long been regarded as a conceptual problem which requires clarification. Within the field of anthropology, for example, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952/1963) reviewed some four hundred definitions and statements by different scholars, in search of a ‘scientific’ and/or ‘operational’ concept. Raymond Williams has tackled the complexities of the word in a different way. Even though recognizing the need for conceptual clarification within a discipline, he stresses the significance of the actual range and overlap of meanings for they indicate "arguments and questions [which] cannot be resolved by reducing the complexity of actual usage" (1976:91).

Faced with the difficult task of clarifying the term ‘culture’ for the purposes of this thesis, I shall thus avoid all-embracing and apparently unproblematic uses of



the term (e.g. 'culture in its broad anthropological sense') and work towards an understanding of the concept which is also sensitive to the "range and overlap of meanings" in circulation in the language teaching profession. It seems to me that Williams's enquiry into what he refers to as a "vocabulary of culture and society" can provide a useful starting point.

For Williams (1967:xiii), *culture* is one of those 'keywords' (cf. also Williams 1976) which acquired new and important meanings in the last decades of the eighteenth century and in the first half of the nineteenth century. He considers the general pattern of changes in their use as "a special kind of map by which it is possible to look again at those wider changes in life and thought to which the changes in language evidently refer". Particularly interesting for the purposes of this thesis is the way he traces the development of *culture* as related to *civilization*.

### 2.1.1 'Culture' and 'civilization': an historical overview

Williams shows how the word culture developed from its early uses as a noun of *process* - the tending of something, basically crops and animals - to become "a word which often provoked either hostility or embarrassment" (1967:xv). As he points out elsewhere (1976:92), hostility to the word culture in English appears to date from the controversy around Matthew Arnold's (1906, 1932) views<sup>9</sup>. It gathered force in the late nineteenth century and beginning of this century, in association with class distinction and with a comparable hostility to *aesthete* and *aesthetic*. He also identifies an area of hostility associated with anti-German feeling, during and after the first

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<sup>9</sup>A phrase that is often quoted as representative of Matthew Arnold's view of culture is "...the best that is known and thought in the world" (cf. *Essays in Criticism* and *Culture and Anarchy*, for example).

World War, and the use of *Kultur* as propaganda. Williams (ibid.) goes on to say that

*it is significant that virtually all the hostility (with the sole exception of the temporary anti-German association) has been connected with uses involving claims to superior knowledge, (...), refinement (...) and distinctions between 'high' art (culture) and popular art and entertainment.*

It may thus be useful to look at what he refers to as "the long and difficult interaction" between *culture* and *civilization*.

The notion of 'civilizing', from Latin *civis* and *civitas* was already known as expressed in the adjective 'civil' as orderly, educated, or polite. Like culture, it referred originally to a general process (of becoming civilized/cultivated). But, as Williams (1977:13) points out

*(...) civilization was to mean much more than this. It expressed two senses which were historically linked: an achieved state, which could be contrasted with 'barbarism', but now also an achieved state of development, which implied historical process and progress. This was the new historical rationality of the Enlightenment, in fact combined with a self-referring celebration of an achieved condition of refinement and order. It was this combination that was to be problematic.*

According to Williams, culture (especially in its common early form as 'cultivation') also carried this problematic double sense. In the late eighteenth century it was in effect undistinguishable from civilization and both terms were used in English, French, and German to refer to human development as a process which culminated in an achieved state. Williams suggests two reasons for their development as distinct terms. First, there was the attack on 'civilization' as a cultivation of 'external' properties - politeness and 'luxury' - as opposed to some more human needs. This attack, from Rousseau on through the Romantic movement, provided the basis of an alternative sense of culture as a general process of 'inner' development which was soon extended to include "the means and works of such development: that



is, 'culture' as a general classification of 'the arts', religion, and the institutions and practices of meanings and values" (Williams 1977:14-15).

Second, there was a reaction against the view of civilization as expressed in the Universal Histories of the eighteenth century and against the 'enlightened' view of history as a process of development from barbarism which culminated in an achieved state of refinement and order, i.e. the metropolitan civilization of England and France. The word culture then underwent another change<sup>10</sup> to express a different sense of human growth and development. Moreover, the plural 'cultures' was introduced "so as to acknowledge variability, and within any culture to recognize the complexity and variability of its shaping forces" (Williams 1977:17).

As Williams points out elsewhere (1981:10-12), "the broad pluralist term was then especially important in the nineteenth-century development of comparative anthropology, where it has continued to designate a whole distinctive way of life". However, the anthropological (and sociological) use has also had a problematic development. In anthropology, for example, early 'mentalistic' theories and '-emic' approaches to culture as shared knowledge stressed the importance of the insiders' views and the role culture played in human perception (cf. Kluckhohn 1944:24-5, for example). 'Materialist' or '-etic' approaches, on the other hand, regarded culture as sets of observable behaviour and/or systems of adaptation within the social structure. In line with this latter view is the work of functionalists and structural-functionalists in social anthropology and sociology (e.g. Malinowski 1922, 1929; Radcliffe-Brown 1941). More recent formulations place an emphasis on knowledge, on culture as a

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<sup>10</sup>Williams attributes 'this decisive change of use' to the German philosopher J.G. von Herder in his *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784-91).



system of ideas - rather than as material phenomena or observable behaviour. Ward D. Goodenough (1964:36) - one of the spokesmen of what has been called 'cognitive anthropology' or 'ethnoscience' - has formulated the following definition:

*As I see it, a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative, sense of the term. By this definition, we should note that culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them. As such, the things people say and do, their social arrangements and events, are products or by-products of their culture as they apply it to the task of perceiving and dealing with their circumstances. To one who knows their culture, these things and events are also signs signifying the cultural forms or models of which they are material representations, (...)*

Erickson (1977/1981:28-9) notes that related 'ideational' perspectives on culture can be found in linguistics and sociology (or ethnomethodology). As examples, he mentions Hymes's (1974) view that acceptable speaking requires the ability to produce not only grammatically, but also situationally, appropriate speech, and Garfinkel's (1967) comparable emphasis on 'member's work' - or the exercise of practical reasoning in everyday life. For Erickson, "all these theoretical positions have in common an emphasis on what people have to know in order to do what they do in ordinary social interaction. They emphasize not simply behavior but the knowledge to produce the behavior".

The work of Lévi-Strauss and Barthes can also be regarded as 'ideational' approaches to culture. As Stuart Hall (1980:30) notes, by deploying the models of structural linguistics as a paradigm for either the study of myths and culinary practices of 'primitive' societies (as for example in Lévi-Strauss 1963, 1966) or the system of



signs and representations in contemporary societies (as in Barthes 1967a, 1967b and 1972), both Lévi-Strauss and Barthes "brought the term 'culture' down from its abstract heights to the level of the 'anthropological', the everyday". But Hall also stresses the importance of structuralism's emphasis on the irreducibility of the cultural: "Culture no longer simply reflected other practices in the realm of ideas. It was itself a practice - a *signifying* practice - and had its own determinate product: meaning". He adds that for structural linguists what defined the cultural as a practice which 'signified' was the way elements were selected, combined and articulated in language. "The stress therefore shifted from the substantive contents of different cultures to their forms of arrangement - from the what to the how of cultural systems."

Further considerations about the place of language in theories of culture and/or about the debate around the relationship between language and culture will be taken up later in this chapter. For the moment, it is important to resume Williams's account of the problematic development of 'culture', particularly with regard to the way (or ways) distinctive cultures are produced.

In fact, fundamental questions about the "formative or determining elements" which produce these distinctive cultures have given rise to a variety of answers both within and outside anthropology. He distinguishes two kinds of positions in this wide range of answers:

*(a) an emphasis on the 'informing spirit' of a whole way of life, which is manifest over the whole range of social activities but is most evident in 'specifically cultural' activities - a language, styles of art, kinds of intellectual work; and (b) an emphasis on a 'whole social order' within which a specifiable culture, in styles of art and kinds of intellectual work, is seen as the direct or indirect product of an order primarily constituted by other social activities. (Williams 1981:11-2)*



Williams (ibid.) sees "a contemporary convergence of the two positions above, also classified as (a) *idealist* and (b) *materialist*: the emphasis is still on a whole social order, but 'cultural practices' are now seen as constitutive of - rather than simply derived from - social order. Besides, the 'informing spirit' is no longer held to constitute all other activities; instead, culture is seen as "the 'signifying system' through which necessarily (though among other means) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored".

He also sees a similar contemporary convergence between

*(i) the anthropological and sociological senses of culture as a distinct 'whole way of life', within which, now, a distinctive 'signifying system' is seen not only as essential but as essentially involved in all forms of social activity, and (ii) the more specialized if also more common sense of culture as 'artistic and intellectual activities', though these, because of the emphasis on a general signifying system, are now much more broadly defined, to include not only all the traditional arts and forms of intellectual production but also all the signifying practices - from language through the arts and philosophy to journalism, fashion and advertising - which now constitute this complex and necessarily extended field. (Ibid. p. 13)*

Such 'contemporary convergence' is probably best expressed in the way culture has been conceptualized in the field known as 'cultural studies' which, according to one of its proponents (Agger 1992), "in the English-speaking world officially began with Richard Hoggart's (1957) *The Uses of Literacy* and the subsequent formation of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1964". In fact, Stuart Hall, who directed the Centre (CCCS) from 1968 to 1972, mentions three other 'originating texts' as the 'original curriculum' of this field of enquiry: Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society* (1958/1967) and *The Long Revolution* (1961/1965), and E. P. Thompson's (1968) *The Making of the English Working Class*. In Hall's view (1980:20), all these works "implied a radical break with previous



conceptualizations. They inflected the term 'culture' away from its traditional moorings (...), getting behind the inert sense of 'period' which sustained the text-context distinction (...), moving the argument into the wider field of social practices and historical processes". More recently, Hall (1993) underlined the importance of Gramsci's and Bakhtin's work for the analysis of ideological discourse at the Centre. In fact, Hall singled out *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Bakhtin/Volosinov 1973) as the key text in the Centre's re-elaboration of "the conceptual categories of ideology, its mechanisms, and mappings in a number of different areas" (Hall 1993:13).

A brief review of the conceptualization of culture in cultural studies will thus follow, mainly in the light of Hall's (1980, 1981, 1993) and Agger's (1992) critical accounts of how cultural studies moved away from a 'Humanities' definition of culture, to a broad 'anthropological' definition, and into the way(s) culture is conceived - and sometimes distinguished from 'ideology' - by the current generation of proponents of cultural studies.

### 2.1.2 Culture and ideology in Cultural Studies

First, as Hall (1980:27) points out, there was the move away from the going 'Humanities' definition of culture:

*Culture no longer meant a set of texts and artefacts, [or] the selective tradition in which those texts and artefacts had been arranged, studied and appreciated. Particularly it did not mean the values and ideals which were supposed to be expressed through those texts. (...) This definition had to be - to use an ugly neologism - 'problematized'.*

Making culture problematic meant making explicit what the Humanities definition obscured when it abstracted texts from the social practices which produced



them, ignoring - for example - 'the circumstances and conditions of cultural reproduction'. Hall says that the first move was then to an 'anthropological' definition of culture as cultural practices.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, there was

*(...) the move to a more historical definition of cultural practices: questioning the anthropological meaning and interrogating its universality by means of the concepts of social formation, cultural power, domination and regulation, resistance and struggle. (Ibid.)*

As Agger (1992) points out in his appraisal of the contribution of the CCCS group to cultural studies, their perspective on culture moved beyond an opposition to a moral or literary concept of culture as a body of received wisdom - characteristic of Leavis' Scrutiny in mainstream literary criticism - to a view of culture as both experience of the world and practice within it, as in anthropology and sociology. Agger also points out that although cultural studies - particularly the CCCS group - borrow from this anthropological broadening of culture, they are all very critical of its lack of specificity<sup>12</sup>:

*The anthropological and sociological definition of culture stresses mainly the experiential side of culture - the notion that culture is what we learn from a common stock of knowledge (...) By identifying culture everywhere, sociologists tend to lose the specificity of the concept of culture that stresses its interinstitutional nature as well as its active side - the possibilities of making new cultures from the ground up. (Ibid. p. 88)*

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<sup>11</sup>In that respect, Hall (1980:19) regards Williams's The Long Revolution as a seminal work which "shifted the whole ground of debate from a literary-moral to an anthropological definition of culture. But it (...) defined culture as 'the whole process' by means of which meanings and definitions are socially constructed and historically transformed, with literature and art as only one, specially privileged, kind of social communication" .

<sup>12</sup>However critical of this lack of specificity of the anthropological concept of culture, Agger (1992:3) sees a good deal of the momentum of cultural studies as provided by "the poststructural turn in anthropology (...) with its reflexive attention to the impact of anthropological discourse on the topics and people studied by anthropologists as well as to the ways in which culture is constituted from the ground up. Within sociology, this tendency (...) stems from Harold Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomedological version of social phenomenology, with its stress on the communicative constitution of meaning in everyday life".



Thus, he goes on to say, the CCCS people extend this culture concept to include two additional themes:

*First, culture is not a monolithic or homogeneous entity but rather has differential manifestations across any given social formation and historical epoch. Second, culture is not simply received wisdom or passive experience, but a host of active interventions, notably through discourse and representation, that may change history as much as transmit the past.* (Agger 1992:8-9)

Besides responding to mainstream anthropologies and sociologies of culture, the Birmingham approach to culture as practice and experience responds to orthodox Marxism, particularly around the classical Marxist question of 'base' and 'superstructure'<sup>13</sup>. In fact, the tension between contending perspectives on the connections between culture, ideology and social process has given rise to distinct strands in Cultural Studies, identified by Hall (1981) as the *culturalist* and the *structuralist paradigms*, or else as *culturalism* and *structuralism*. Before looking at their points of divergence, it should be noted that structuralism shared with culturalism a radical break with the terms of the base/superstructure metaphor. As Hall (1981:28) points out, "culturalists and structuralists alike ascribed to the domains hitherto defined as 'superstructural' a specificity and effectivity, a constitutive primacy, which pushed them beyond the terms of reference of 'base' and 'superstructure'". Not unlike the culturalists, Lévi-Strauss and Althusser, too, "were anti-reductionist and anti-economist in their very cast of thought, and critically attacked that transitive causality which, for so long, had passed itself as 'classical Marxism'" (ibid.).

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<sup>13</sup>Among the 'influential figures' and 'seminal' texts also considered by Hall as marking the 'break' in Cultural Studies into what he calls 'a complex Marxism' are: Lukacs's 'literary historical work', Goldmann's Hidden God, the first translations of Walter Benjamin, the early work of the Frankfurt School theorists, Sartre's Question of Method.

### **‘Culturalism’**

Considered by some as the dominant paradigm, "it is opposed to the base-superstructure way of formulating the relationship between ideal and material forces, especially where the ‘base’ is defined as the determination by the ‘economic’ in any simple sense". Instead, as Hall (1981:26) goes on to say, "it prefers the wider formulation - the dialectic between social being and social consciousness; neither separable into its distinct poles". Culturalism conceptualizes culture as "interwoven with all social practices; and those practices, in turn, as a common form of human activity: sensuous human praxis, the activity through which men and women make history. [That is], it defines ‘culture’ as both the meanings and values which arise amongst distinctive social groups and classes, on the basis of their given historical conditions and relationships, through which they ‘handle’ and respond to the conditions of existence; and as the lived traditions and practices through which those ‘understandings’ are expressed and in which they are embodied" (Hall 1981:26).

### **‘Structuralisms’ and ‘ideology’**

Hall (ibid. p. 27) goes on to say that "the ‘culturalist’ strand in Cultural Studies was interrupted by the arrival on the intellectual scene of the ‘structuralisms’". He notes that "whereas the culturalist paradigm can be defined without requiring a conceptual reference to the term ‘ideology’ (...), the ‘structuralist’ interventions have been largely articulated around the concept of ‘ideology’: in keeping with its more impeccably Marxist lineage, culture does not figure so prominently". He adds, however, that this may be true of the Marxist structuralists, particularly Louis Althusser (1969, 1971), it is certainly not true of Lévi-Strauss (1963, 1966) who worked consistently with the term ‘culture’ and regarded ‘ideologies’ as of much lesser importance. Yet, Hall (ibid.



p. 27) believes that "when in Althusser's work, the more classical Marxist themes were recovered [e.g. the role of 'consciousness'] it remained the case that Marx was 'read' - and reconstituted - through the terms of the linguistic paradigm".

### **'Consciousness': the dividing line**

Still according to Stuart Hall (ibid. p. 29), culturalism and structuralism - and their central concepts of 'culture' and 'ideology' - are 'starkly counterposed' in the way they regard the role of consciousness in the formation of cultural/ideological categories. In culturalism, he says, "experience was the ground - the terrain of the 'lived' - where consciousness and conditions intersected". In structuralism, on the other hand, "one could only 'live' and experience one's conditions *in and through* the categories, classifications and frameworks of the culture [and] these categories were the effect of 'unconscious' structures".

Hall goes on to say that though the culturalists had defined the forms of consciousness and culture as collective, "they had stopped far short of the radical proposition that in culture and in language, the subject was 'spoken by' the categories of culture in which he/she thought, rather than 'speaking them'. These categories were, however, not merely collective rather than individual productions: they were for the structuralists, *unconscious* structures" (1981:29).

His point is that, though Lévi-Strauss spoke only of 'Culture', his concept provided the basis for an easy translation, by Althusser, into the conceptual framework of ideology. That is, Lévi-Strauss concentrated on language as the principal medium of cultures and on the internal relations within 'signifying practices' by means of which the categories of meaning were produced. In so doing, as Hall (ibid. p. 28) aptly notes, "the causal logic of determinacy was abandoned in favour of a



structuralist causality - a logic of *arrangement*, of internal relations, of articulation of parts within a structure". In Althusser's translation of Lévi-Strauss's conceptual framework, ideology was thus formulated:

*Ideology is indeed a system of 'representations', but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with 'consciousness' (...) It is above all as structures that they impose on the vast majority of men, not via their 'consciousness' (...) It is within this ideological unconsciousness that men succeed in altering the 'lived' relation between them and the world and acquiring that new form of specific unconsciousness called 'consciousness'. (Althusser 1969:233)*

As Hall (1981:30) points out, many of the other lines of divergence between the culturalist and the structuralist paradigms "flow from this point: the conception of 'men' as bearers of the structures that speak and place them, rather than as active agents in the making of their own history: the emphasis on a structural rather than a historical 'logic'; (...) the recasting of history as a march of the structures (...)".

It was largely Antonio Gramsci's (1971) work which provided Cultural Studies with the conceptual means to restore the dialectic between 'consciousness' and 'conditions', and "to *think forwards* from the best elements in the structuralist and culturalist enterprises" (Hall 1981:36).

### **'Hegemony': conflict over meaning**

Crucial to the debate at the Centre, and to the elaboration of a non-idealist, or materialistic theory of culture able to address "the question of the relation between the logic of thinking and the 'logic' of historical process" (Hall 1981:36) was Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony'. As Stuart Hall (1980:36) points out:

*For Gramsci, 'hegemony' is never a permanent state of affairs and never uncontested. (...) 'Hegemony' is always the (temporary) mastery of a particular theatre of struggle. (...) Thus particular outcomes always depend on the balance in the relations of force in any theatre of struggle and reform. This rids Gramsci's thinking of any trace of a necessitarian logic and any temptation to 'read off' political and*



*ideological outcomes from some hypostatized economic base. Its effect is to show how cultural questions can be linked, in a non-reductionist manner, to other levels: it enables us to think of societies as complex formations, necessarily contradictory, always historic specific.*

Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' is also taken up by Raymond Williams within the framework of culture, ideology and the problems of domination and subordination. Whereas ideology can be seen as a system, a static structure, or an 'abstract totalization', hegemony should rather be seen as an active process which does not just passively exist as a form of dominance:

*A static hegemony, of the kind which is indicated by abstract totalizing definitions of a dominant 'ideology' or 'world-view', can ignore or isolate (...) alternatives and opposition, but to the extent that they are significant the decisive hegemonic function is to control or transform or even incorporate them. In this active process the hegemonic has to be seen as more than the simple transmission of an (unchanging) dominance. (Williams 1977:113)*

To the concept of hegemony, Williams thus adds the concepts of 'counter-hegemony' and 'alternative hegemony':

*A lived hegemony is always a process. It is not, except analytically, a system or a structure. It is a realized complex of experiences, relationships, and activities, with specific and changing pressures and limits. In practice, that is, hegemony can never be singular. Its internal structures are highly complex, as can readily be seen in any concrete analysis. Moreover (and this is crucial, reminding us of the necessary thrust of the concept), it does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own. We have then to add to the concept of hegemony the concepts of counter-hegemony and alternative hegemony, which are real and persistent elements of practice. (Ibid. pp. 112-113)*

A perspective on culture enlightened by the concepts of hegemony<sup>14</sup> and

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<sup>14</sup>It is important, perhaps, to point out that Williams (1977:113 and 114) adds a cautionary note/argument to his discussion of 'hegemony'. In fact, besides stating that "it is misleading, as a general method, to reduce all political and cultural initiatives and contributions to the terms of the hegemony", he goes on to say that it can be "persuasively argued that all or nearly all initiatives and contributions, even when they take on manifestly alternative or oppositional forms, are in practice tied to the hegemonic: that the dominant culture, so to say, at once produces and limits its own forms of



counter-hegemony stresses the conflictual nature of culture rather than the common sharing of values and meanings. As Agger, cited above, points out:

*Cultural studies emphasizes that culture is conflict over meaning<sup>15</sup> - over how to assign value to human existence, expression, experience. Hegemonic culture attempts to define culture from the top down, in terms of the system's own needs for legitimation, productivism and consumerism. Counter-hegemonic culture resists these definitions and instead proposes alternative formulations (...) (Agger 1992:10)*

*[Thus], cultural studies proponents of all sorts, stemming from Hoggart's (1957) original analysis of working-class discourse, Raymond Williams' (1958) culture-in-society-perspective, neo-Marxist theories of culture and feminist approaches to culture, contend that culture is not an undifferentiated system that serves to integrate society (...) but instead is a region of serious contest and conflict over meaning. For this reason, cultural studies proponents do not talk about a single culture but rather about many, often cross-cutting cultures - cultures of class, race, gender and nation, amongst others. (Ibid. p. 9)*

At the risk of reducing the complexity of actual usage (cf. Williams 1976:91, and 2.1 above), it may be fair to say that some of the (re-)formulations of the concept of culture so far discussed seem to be significantly related to the perspectives on education and language in this thesis. For example, culture as multiple - often conflicting - practices can be seen as particularly congenial with the view of education as a constant interplay between resistance and conformity whereby the language classroom is not simply a site for the 'transmission of knowledge' but the privileged locus for 'conflict over meaning'. Likewise, the dialogic perspective on language

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counter-culture". But, he adds, "it would be wrong to overlook the importance of works and ideas which, while clearly affected by hegemonic limits and pressures, are at least in part significant breaks beyond them, which may again in part be neutralized, reduced, or incorporated, but which in their most active elements nevertheless come through as independent and original".

<sup>15</sup>Agger's main argument in this book (1992) is that the cultural studies movement today splits into a conformist version and a more critical one. The first is "an effort to professionalize an atheoretical, apolitical approach to the analysis of popular culture", whereas the more critical version "conceives of cultural studies in its best sense as an activity of critical theory that directly decodes the hegemonizing messages of the culture industry permeating every nook and cranny of lived experience, from entertainment to education" (ibid. p. 5).



which informs this thesis is sensitive to the multiplicity of meanings at work in the classroom, or else, to the way disparate ‘voices’ may bring differences into a meaningful tension.

It is important to note, however, that no claims are here made that the perspectives considered above reflect the prevalent views in mainstream foreign language teaching or that these, in turn, should find resonance in the foreign language classrooms under observation. In fact, in order to get a better understanding of current classroom meanings of ‘culture’ it is necessary to examine the various definitions and uses of the word in the language teaching profession over time, against the backdrop of the development of the concept in the social sciences. It is to this examination which I shall now turn.

## 2.2 Culture in Foreign Language Teaching

### 2.2.1 An historical overview

As Stern (1992:205) points out, "there is no question that culture, at least on paper, forms part of most language curriculums". He adds that whatever it is called - 'background studies' in Britain, 'civilisation' in France, 'Kulturkunde' or 'Landeskunde' in Germany - "there has been a continuing history of this aspect of language teaching dating back at least to the early 1950s and even further to the beginning of the century".

As far back as 1904, Jespersen stated in his *How to Teach a Foreign Language* that "the highest purpose in the teaching of foreign languages may perhaps be said to be the access to the best thoughts and institutions of a foreign nation, its literature, culture - in short, the spirit of the nation in the widest sense of the word" (cited in Rivers 1968/1981:314).

But an appraisal of the role of culture in the history of foreign language teaching may require some justification, as the one provided by Buttjes (1991a:48):

*(...) some of our problems in 'giving language teaching a sociolinguistic direction' (Stern 1983:262) may be related to narrow working concepts of language teaching as much as an attitude of neglect regarding traditions of language teaching. There is no simple returning to the roots, but the rapid turnover of established teaching practice following changes in linguistic educational theory may in itself betray a lack of confidence and direction in our disciplines. Even though the hope of learning from history may be futile and the danger of imposing our concepts on history may be inevitable, making use of the past by recreating a usable past may be a worthwhile attempt towards providing that sociocultural orientation which has been found missing in the theory of language teaching.*



It was through the Reform Movement nearly a century ago that modern languages and a related concern with foreign cultures found their way into British and German curriculums. As Buttjes (1990:53-4) puts it:

*[The Reform Movement] was an educational movement originating independently in different European states at about the same time and represents the last overall attempt at integrating pragmatic language skills and humanistic learning objectives. Unfortunately, this comprehensive and international impetus within our profession was lost in the course of the twentieth century, not only under the impact of two world wars. The language teaching profession came to concentrate more and more on efficiency of methods rather than on educational evaluation.*

For language reformers like Viëtor, Sweet, Jespersen and Palmer, the emphasis of language teaching should be on the spoken language and 'connected' texts. For Sweet, for example, texts were primarily regarded as sources of "associations between linguistic elements within the language, and between these elements and the outside world" (Howatt 1984:185).

As Buttjes (1990:54) goes on to point out:

*(...) within the German context of modern language reform, the emphasis on knowledge of the foreign realia ('Realienkunde') can certainly be considered as one of the key demands of the reformers. Within the foreign language rationale, culture had come to occupy a central and crucial position. Foreign language teaching was seen to concern itself with 'the real life expression of the modern peoples' (...) and foreign language teachers were considered 'experts of the material and intellectual culture of foreign peoples. The term 'realia' was at the time expanded beyond merely visible objects to include any aspect of the foreign social reality.*

The outbreak of World War I is identified by Buttjes (ibid. pp. 54-55) as one of "those conditions and forces that retarded the initial impulse of the reform movement towards cultural content and cosmopolitan objectives in language teaching". He also believes, however, that the experience of war was responsible for a renewal of interest in the political and cultural function of foreign languages, both in Britain



and in Germany, since "the cultural and political ignorance of foreign nations that had been apparent before and during the war could no longer be afforded".

Government reports issued towards the end of the war, such as the British *Modern Studies* and the German *Foreign Studies (Auslandsstudien)* regarded foreign language teaching under practical and educational aspects. Stern (1983:247) notes that the British Report "reveals, even in its title, a deliberate emphasis on the cultural aspect: 'Modern Studies' not simply 'Modern Languages' - in other words, the study of a country, its culture and literature, not the study of language alone". He also notes a similar trend in France where language programmes were being supplemented by the study of 'civilisation'.

In Germany, the view that cultural knowledge ('Kulturkunde') should be part of modern language programmes has a particular history which, as Stern (1983:247) points out, can "serve both as a lesson and a warning when we consider present-day attempts to teach culture". The legacy of 'Kulturkunde' has also helped some writers to explain the fact that in Germany, since the war, culture teaching has been dominated by attempts to make it value-free or 'culturally neutral', as for example by making it subordinate to communicative efficiency.<sup>16</sup> Bearing in mind that one should never underestimate the burden of such legacy, I shall now turn to a brief discussion of 'the ambiguous past of *Kulturkunde*'<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup>This view has been put forward by Kramer 1976 and other German writers on culture teaching, reviewed and quoted in Byram 1986:324-5.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. Buttjes, D. 1991b. "Culture in German Foreign Language Teaching: Making Use of an Ambiguous Past". In Buttjes and Byram (eds.) 1991:47-62.



### **‘Kulturkunde’: the ethnocentric bias**

This is how Stern (1983:247-8) views the development of ‘Kulturkunde’ from its ‘promising’ meaning as the ‘history of ideas of another country’ to the extreme, ethnocentric view of the concept ‘in the spirit of the Hitler era’:

*Since the days of von Humboldt the German intellectual tradition had been accustomed to viewing language and nation as closely related. (...) Towards the end of the century, the German philosopher Dilthey advocated the notion of ‘structure’, ‘pattern’, or ‘underlying principle’ as fundamental concepts in the humanities and social sciences in order to interpret historical and social events. (...) Even before WWI, and more so in the interwar years, Kulturkunde was increasingly understood as an assertion of German identity. German educators advocated Kulturkunde in mother tongue education as the unifying principle binding together the teaching of ‘German subjects’: German language, German literature, German history and the geography of Germany.*

Stern goes on to say that when ‘Kulturkunde’ in the interwar period was applied to foreign language teaching "it was treated as a foil against which to develop a better appreciation of German culture". Thus, the search for the ‘underlying structure’ or the ‘mind of a nation’ (‘*Geist*’ or ‘*Seele*’) was soon to become "an invitation to blatant forms of prejudice and stereotyping about the ‘French *esprit*’ or ‘English realism’" (ibid.).

In a similar vein, Buttjes (1991b) traces the history of ‘Kulturkunde’ back to the post-war days when foreign languages gained an unusual support in Germany and the first chair for American Studies was set up at universities together with new institutes for ‘area research’. His comments are worth quoting in full:

*Teachers’ organisations argued for the priority of cultural knowledge (‘Kulturkunde’) in modern languages. However, this demand - familiar from the times of the modern language reform - was undergoing significant changes in the 1920’s. Culture was set apart from the social realia and mystified as a people’s soul and character as expressed in their philosophy, arts and literature. Any cultural expression was to be reduced to certain national traits of character. These characteristics*



*would then have to be compared between the native and the foreign culture; this comparison would lead to a knowledge of weaknesses and strengths which would be for the national benefit. Finally, the German cultural values ('Deutschkunde') were prescribed as the cross-curricular standard for all subjects in the Prussian school reform of 1924/25 leaving no room for any genuine interest in foreign cultures.*

(Buttjes 1991b:55)

He adds that the tenets of 'Deutschkunde' and its fascist counterpart, 'Wesenskunde' - that had come to dominate 'Kulturkunde' in the 1930s - were to be discredited in Germany after World War II, together with nationalism. However, much of the philosophical and political thinking underlying 'Kulturkunde' returned in the period of the Cold War, "when Western ideas and ideals appeared to be threatened by alien ideologies". Besides, the international political scene in the 1950s "encouraged conservative culture concepts in Germany as well as more patriotic tendencies" within the newly-established discipline of American Studies. (Ibid. p. 56)

It is interesting to note how Buttjes views the rise of literature to the privileged position once occupied by 'Kulturkunde' in foreign language curriculums in Germany. He believes that the experience of the failure of 'Kulturkunde' and the emerging intellectual climates of the Cold War and of New Criticism "led many foreign language practitioners to retreat from the realities of political and social life into the realm of high literature and those human values that were said to transcend times and cultures". Likewise, Buttjes sees the new international political scene as partly responsible for the revival of interest in the cultural and political dimension of language teaching.

Further considerations about the politicization of the language-culture debate will be deferred to a later section. For the moment, it is necessary to resume the



historical overview by considering culture teaching in countries other than Germany, from the interwar period.

### **The anthropological move**

Stern (1983:249) notes that in the interwar period culture teaching in other countries was less developed and less clearly defined than in Germany. In Britain and America, for example, the focus was on history, institutions, customs, as well as on 'the distinctive contributions of the foreign country to human civilization'. In fact, Stern identifies a dual sense of culture in British and American writings on the teaching of modern languages published in 1929 and 1931, respectively. In the British document<sup>18</sup>, culture was interpreted "as the personal development, through language learning, of a cultivated mind: the training of 'reasoning powers', 'intelligence', 'imagination', and the 'artistic faculties'" ; [in the 1931 Reports<sup>19</sup>, on the other hand, culture was regarded as] 'the knowledge of the history and the institutions of foreign peoples and of their psychology as expressed in their ideals and standards, and of their contributions to civilization'".

A parallel could be drawn between this dual sense noted by Stern in these documents and the views of culture and civilization during the Enlightenment and the Romantic movement (cf. Williams 1977:14-15 and section 2.1.1 above.) The sense of culture as in the 1931 Reports quoted by Stern reflects the 'enlightened' view of civilization as 'external' development towards an ideal state of refinement and order - i.e. 'European civilization'. Such view was under attack from Rousseau on through

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<sup>18</sup>IAAM (INCORPORATED ASSOCIATION OF ASSISTANT MASTERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS). 1929. *Memorandum on the Teaching of Modern Languages*. London: University of London Press.

<sup>19</sup>Fife, R.H. (compiler) 1931. *A Summary of Reports on the Modern Foreign Languages with an Index to the Reports*. Publications of the American and Canadian Committees on Modern Languages, vol.18. New York: MacMillan.

the Romantic movement when culture was regarded as a general process of 'inner' development and the means and works of such development, i.e., the arts, religion, and the institutions and practices of meanings and values. This latter view bears resemblance to the interpretation of culture in the 1929 document above.

It can also be said that despite the diversity of views of culture expressed in language teaching documents of the period, there was already a certain consensus in the profession that the educational value of language teaching would lie in its power to "broaden the learners' horizons" and contribute to international understanding. It was also consensual that culture teaching was "an educationally valuable addition to the customary language and literary studies, but it was recognized that in practice it played a subordinate role" (Stern 1983:249).

As Byram (1988:15-16) points out, the English phrase 'background studies' is symptomatic of the little status that the teaching of culture has always played in the language teaching profession, in spite of the traditional belief in "the contribution which the understanding of another culture and civilization should make to the reduction of prejudice and the encouragement of tolerance". He adds that an equally traditional view among foreign language professionals in Britain has been that 'civilisation', 'Landeskunde' - or whatever it is called - "need not be taught directly, that it will be a corollary of language and literature teaching".

This 'background' status of the teaching of culture in language learning pedagogy remained relatively unaltered even after language teaching, particularly in America, began to acknowledge the impact of anthropology and its broad concept of culture. In the 50s and 60s, writings of theorists like Brooks (1960/1964) - who championed the cause of culture in language teaching - promoted the broad





‘anthropological’ sense of culture, or the ‘way-of-life culture’, as the ‘technical’, ‘scientific’ sense, often distinguished from culture as ‘refinement’ and ‘artistic endeavors’. In the chapter entitled "Language and Culture" of his 1960 book, Brooks regrets the fact that "authors and publishers have operated [until then] without benefit of the anthropologist's concept of the word. Aside from culture in the refinement sense, these [the available textbooks] present, in picture and in print, little more than the colorful, the quaint, and the inoffensive". In tune with the ethnographic or ‘*Emic*’ (cf. Pike 1967:8-18) spirit of the time, Brooks (ibid. p. 88) goes on to argue that, for pedagogical purposes, culture should be presented as "the view of life as seen from within the new speech community".

Language teaching writings in America and Europe were soon to incorporate the distinction between culture with a small ‘c’ and culture with a capital ‘C’ - or ‘deep culture’ and ‘formal culture’, in Brooks’s terms - the first allowing more easily for cross-cultural comparisons in the language class, which should then lead to intercultural understanding. (cf. for example, Lado 1957 and 1964; Brooks 1960/1964; Nostrand 1966; Rivers 1968; Seelye 1968). To achieve what was considered by many to be ‘its fundamental objective’, i.e. the promotion of intercultural understanding, language teaching was then offered the new analytic tools of a contrastive approach to language and cultural differences - as Fries puts it, in the foreword to Lado’s 1957 book:

*[Lado's] comparisons demanded more and more complete descriptions, including not only the narrowly linguistic features but a wide selection of the social-cultural features in which the languages operated. He found (...) 'blind spots' throughout the whole range of linguistic-social-cultural features - 'blind spots' that must be overcome if sound intercultural understanding was to be achieved - the fundamental objective of all language teaching.*

Fries goes on to say that *Linguistics Across Cultures* would present "a practical approach to the kind of systematic linguistic-cultural comparisons that must form the basis of satisfactory teaching materials". The suggestions of contrastive analysis, however, have not proved fruitful for language teaching purposes. Moreover, analysts of culture(s) - within and outside anthropology - had to deal with the vagueness of the 'anthropological' concept, now extended to include artifacts, beliefs, values, and a host of other features (cf. discussion in 2.1 above). Those who advocated culture in language teaching were soon faced with the unsurmountable task of translating the ill-defined, expanded concept of culture - or rather, the combined Culture-culture(s) version which prevailed in language teaching writings at the time - into operational chunks for classroom use. Not surprisingly, such attempts to "reduce the vast and amorphous nature of the culture concept to manageable proportions" have resulted in 'lists of items' or 'few broad categories', as Stern (1992:208) puts it. Brooks, for example, produced two such inventories, the first containing 64 items (1960:90-95), later subsumed under ten broad categories or "*matters that appear central and critical in the analysis of a culture (...) as follows:*

1. *Symbolism*
2. *Value*
3. *Authority*
4. *Order*
5. *Ceremony*
6. *Love*
7. *Honor*
8. *Humor*
9. *Beauty*
10. *Spirit*

(Brooks 1968:213)



The list above was offered as part of a pedagogic alternative to the model developed in anthropology in 1959, by Edward T. Hall, for the analysis of culture.<sup>20</sup> A decade later, Nostrand suggested another alternative for classroom pedagogy to Hall's 'map of culture'. Nostrand's (1978) 'Emergent Model applied to contemporary France' displays an inventory of 32 main features of a 'sociocultural system' organized around four component (sub-) systems. (Cf. Damen 1987:96)

These various attempts to find a framework for analysis and presentation of a foreign culture in language learning can be rightly regarded as part of the wider search "for a common universal point of contact between cultures (...), that can transform cultural barriers into cultural bridges", as Kramsch (1993:223-4) puts it. She goes on to say that in the 1960s and 1970s, scholars of intercultural communication, for example Hall, Brooks, Nostrand, and Seelye (mentioned above), "shared a common experience of second language classrooms in which scores of learners had either to be socialized into an existing English-speaking society as rapidly as possible, or to make themselves accepted in a foreign society. In their search for bridges between the mainstream national cultures, they were convinced that the values and behavior patterns that obtain in these societies could and should be taught; they searched for structural ways in which this could most effectively be done".

It should be noted that the search for bridges still goes on, even though - as Kramsch (ibid. p. 19) goes on to say - "the current contributions to the problem of language and culture by such thinkers as Byram (1989), Fairclough (1989), Tannen

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<sup>20</sup>Hall's model - or 'map of culture' - starts from the assumption that there are ten kinds of human activity which are universal. Based on these ten 'primary message systems' (PMS), Hall thus develops a two-dimensional grid with slots for 100 possible combinations or 'major areas of cross-cultural variation'. (Cf. Hall, E.T. 1959. *The Silent Language*. Gordon City, NY: Doubleday, pp. 174-5).

(1990), Lakoff (1990), show that we are no longer satisfied with structuralist solutions".

As Widdowson (1988) has pointed out, underlying claims that language learning can 'bridge cultural gaps' (cf. Valdes 1986) is the assumption that culture and language are so inextricably bound together that you cannot learn one without the other. Thus, before considering current directions in the teaching of culture, I shall try to address the complex issue of the relationship between language and culture, with particular reference to language teaching and learning.

### 2.2.2 On the relationship of language and culture

The nature of the relationship between language and culture has long challenged scholars, even before the linguistic relativity theory gained its first formulations in the writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf. As Carroll points out:

*From ancient times there has been speculation that the total pattern of a particular language exerts an influence on the minds of those who use it, channeling their thoughts in special and distinct ways and perhaps even causing them to experience their world differently from those who speak other languages. Most philosophers of language have been content to make only general observations on this alleged relationship, stopping short of specifying the precise nature of the influence claimed or of offering a theory of how the effect is exerted.*

(Carroll 1963:1)

What has been called the theory of linguistic relativity, or the Sapir-Whorf (Whorfian) hypothesis can be traced back (cf. Greenberg 1954, Carroll 1963) to the ideas of the German philosopher Herder and to von Humboldt's (1963) belief that languages reflect particular world views ('*Weltanschauung*') or perception of reality. To preserve the (German) language was then said to preserve its own 'ethos', its world view. In the first half of this century, this linguistic *Weltanschauung* tradition



was taken up in America by linguists and/or anthropologists working on American Indian languages and cultures. Elaborating upon Sapir's work (1921, 1949) his disciple Whorf proposed the principle of linguistic relativity (1956), as stated in this widely quoted paragraph:

*The background linguistic system (in other words, the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade. Formulation of ideas is not an independent process, strictly rational in the old sense, but is part of a particular grammar and differs, from slightly to greatly, as between different grammars. We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds - and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way - an agreement that holds through our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, **but its terms are absolutely obligatory**; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees.*

(Whorf 1956:215, emphasis in the original)

Although the Whorfian hypothesis was stated in the most appealing terms in several of Whorf's articles, it was never stated precisely enough to be adequately evaluated (cf. Carroll 1963:4). Moreover, as revealed in the quotation above, Whorf's position of linguistic relativity would often lean towards determinism. As Widdowson puts it:

*[Whorf's] argument slips easily from relativity to determinism. It is not simply that individuals in a community have a common conceptual disposition; they are constrained into conformity by the very code that they acquire. They have no choice: the terms are obligatory. This determinism (...) is difficult to accept, and even more difficult to demonstrate. (Widdowson 1992:18)*



There have been several attempts, however, either to validate or to refuse the principle of linguistic relativity, as attested in the literature. Examples of the first are Kluckhohn and Leighton (1946), Hoijer (1953), and Kluckhohn (1954), whereas Lenneberg (1953) and Feuer (1953) are well-known for their critique of Whorf's methodology and conclusions. This is how Carroll summarizes some of the most common arguments against Whorf:

*Lenneberg insists that linguistic and nonlinguistic events must be separately observed and described before they can be correlated, and that the usual canons of evidence must be applied in demonstrating any association between such events. Otherwise, the linguistic relativity principle becomes embarrassingly circular, or at least tautological, in that the only evidence for differences in 'world view' turns out to be the linguistic differences. Feuer, a social philosopher, believes that on a priori grounds one would not expect cultures speaking different languages to have different ways of perceiving space, time, causation, and other fundamental elements in the physical world, because a correct perception of these elements is necessary to survival.*

(Carroll 1956:28)

In the same paper, Carroll assesses these and other attempts to validate or dismiss Whorf's views, as follows:

*In truth, the validity of the linguistic relativity principle has thus far not been sufficiently demonstrated; neither has it been flatly refuted. It seems to be agreed that languages differ in many strange and striking ways, but it is a moot point whether such differences in language structure are associated with actual differences in ways of perceiving and conceiving the world. (Ibid. pp. 27-8)*

In his own attempt to provide a satisfactory answer to the possible relevance of a linguistic relativity theory in language teaching, Carroll formulates elsewhere (1963:12) a softer version of the Whorfian hypothesis, in another widely quoted paragraph:

*Insofar as languages differ in the way they encode objective experience, language users tend to sort out and distinguish experiences differently according to the categories provided by their respective*



*languages. These cognitions will tend to have certain effects on behavior.*

It goes without saying that the idea of linguistic relativity and all the controversy generated by Whorf's writings should soon reverberate in language teaching. It would be fair to say, however, that the Whorfian hypothesis - particularly in its strong version of linguistic determinism - is treated with caution in the literature on cultural teaching, even by those writers who strongly advocated the teaching of culture in the 1960s and 1970s (for example, Rivers 1968/1981:340-342; Seelye 1968:49-51 and 1974:18-20; Nostrand 1966:15). Although "sufficiently imbued with Sapir's and Whorf's ideas to acknowledge the closeness of language and culture" (Stern 1983:251), these 'advocates of culture' in language teaching also acknowledged the alternative views and counter-arguments put forward by Whorf's critics. From the 1960s, statements about the cultural embedment of language used to further the cause of culture teaching in the language classroom became increasingly common in the literature, alongside warnings against facile cross-cultural comparisons and over-generalizations. The following quotations are illustrative of the 'spirit of the times' in the language teaching profession:

*Whether [teachers] realize it or not, language teaching cannot avoid conveying impressions of another culture. Language cannot be separated completely from the culture in which it is deeply embedded. Any listening to the utterances of native speakers, any attempt at authentic use of the language to convey messages, any reading of original texts (...), any examination of pictures of native speakers engaged in natural activities will introduce cultural elements into the classroom. By failing to draw students' attention to these cultural elements and to discuss their implications, the teacher allows misconceptions to develop in the students' minds. When they misunderstand the culturally determined bases for the reactions and behavior of other peoples, students can develop contempt for and hostility toward the speakers of the language they are learning.*  
(Rivers 1968/1981:315)



*Language and culture are not separable; it is better to see the special characteristics of a language as cultural entities and to recognize that language enters into the learning and use of nearly all other cultural elements.* (Brooks 1960/1964:85)

*Culture is really an integral part of the interaction between language and thought. Cultural patterns, customs, and ways of life are expressed in language; culture specific world views are reflected in language.*  
(Brown 1980:141)

Similar views were expressed in an influential document issued by American educational authorities in 1960:

- (1) Language is a part of culture, and must be approached with the same attitudes that govern our approach to culture as a whole.*
  - (2) Language conveys culture, so that the language teacher is also of necessity a teacher of a culture.*
  - (3) Language is itself subject to culturally conditioned attitudes and beliefs, which cannot be ignored in the language classroom.*
- (Stern 1983:251, reproduced from Bishop 1960:29)

Alongside Whorfian undertones, however, there was often a cautionary note in those writings. Seelye (1968:50), for example, acknowledges that "if the theory [i.e. the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis] were true it would imbue language courses with new-found importance". However, he also warns teachers against the "off-the-cuff pronouncements on the relation between language and culture [which] are the rule in language classes". Echoing main arguments in the literature against Whorf's views [cf. Carroll 1956 and Lenneberg 1953 above], Seelye goes on to say: "The trick is to demonstrate an association between the two, language and culture. (...) To draw a cognitive conclusion from purely linguistic data is to while away the hours in tautology".

In a similar vein, Rivers accepts the Whorfian claims with reservations: "One thing would appear to be undeniable: that different languages establish different categories for various aspects of reality." After quoting Carroll's modified hypothesis



of linguistic relativity [which] seems to fit the facts more closely than that of Whorf's, she concludes with a cautionary note: "This seems to be as far as we can go in the present state of knowledge; it does not go far enough to justify the assertion that each language imposes on its speakers a distinctive world view".

As Louise Damen, who has recently also made a case for culture in the language classroom, points out: "Rejection of the strong version of the hypothesis seems well supported and so justified. A modified version [Carroll's] may be equally suspect, for the arrow still points from language to culture". Moreover, she believes that 'the old argument over the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis should be given a decent funeral' so that attention could be turned to the questions the Whorfian hypothesis addressed and that have yet to be answered (Damen 1986:129).

And they are likely to remain so - or at least continue to blur the issue of culture in the language classroom - unless they are adequately (re-)formulated against the background of language teaching/learning as an *educational* enterprise.

A controversial contribution to this debate has been made by Widdowson (1988/1992). He addresses the question of the relationship between language and culture by distinguishing two perspectives: the 'symbolic' and the 'indexical'. The first concerns "the semantic relationship between language and culture, the determination of symbolic meaning, the way language *represents* culture". The second has to do "with the pragmatic relationship between language and culture, the determination of indexical meaning, the way language *refers* to culture" (Widdowson 1988:14-15, emphasis in the original). It is the symbolic relationship between language and culture which has been the traditional concern of scholars as von Humboldt, Sapir, Whorf, and - more recently - Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Lakoff (1987), and in particular, of

Fowler's (1986) critical discourse analysis. Widdowson (ibid. p. 17) argues that the problem with this latter area of enquiry, which is "essentially the application of literary critical techniques to non-literary texts to find representational meaning in the message form beyond the referential meaning of the message" is that it fails to perceive that cultural attitudes and values (or 'ideology') are not directly signalled by linguistic forms themselves but are a function of the perceived relationship between forms and contextual factors".

By taking a dual perspective on language and culture Widdowson distinguishes between this traditional concern with "cultural representation encoded in the language itself" and a related concern "with the way in which factors *external* to language are referred to in the normal process of language use". Central to his argument is his view of communication as "the negotiation of a relationship between knowledge of language, or systemic knowledge, and knowledge of the world, or schematic knowledge". Moreover, he argues that systemic knowledge is culturally independent whereas schematic knowledge is definitely not. Or else, he sees communication as "a matter of assigning indexical value to linguistic signs by taking bearings on both systemic [i.e. culturally independent] and schematic [and culturally dependent] knowledge". His point is that learners can learn to communicate in a foreign language by referring "to the schematic knowledge of their own familiar world". What they need to learn are the procedures for realizing indexical meaning; once these procedures are set in motion, the learners will make the necessary adjustments "to infer the culturally unfamiliar". For Widdowson thus "learning a language involves drawing on meaning potential which has not been conventionally encoded in lexis and syntax (...) to meet changing conceptual and communicative needs both in the



individual and in society" (p. 17). In sum, it is his contention that a language can be "symbolically and indexically dissociated from any particular cultural affiliation: hence its adaptability to different needs and purposes". He concludes by stating that "whether, and to what extent [language and culture] *should* be dissociated pedagogically will depend on how educational objectives are defined" (p. 21).

And (language) educational policies certainly depend, I would suggest, on how one conceives of the power relations within social and discourse processes. It seems to me that what is backgrounded by Widdowson and highlighted by Fairclough's (1992:28-9) appraisal of 'critical linguistics' is that it tends to neglect "both discourse as a domain in which social struggles take place, and change in discourse as a dimension of wider social and cultural change". As Fairclough rightly points out:

*What is at issue more generally is the exclusively top-down view of power and ideology in critical linguistics, which accords with an emphasis (...) on social stasis rather than social change, social structures rather than social action, and social reproduction rather than social transformation.*

In Fairclough's view, critical discourse analysis lacks "a social theory of discourse based upon a revaluation of these dualisms as poles in a relationship of tension" (ibid.). The same is true, to a certain extent, of the neo-Whorfian perspectives which seem to characterize recent directions in the language-culture debate in foreign language teaching. A consideration of these current directions will be taken up next.

### **2.2.3 Current directions: politicizing the debate**

In the last decade, there has been "a revival of interest among language teachers and researchers in the cultural content and political purposes of foreign language teaching" (Buttjes and Byram 1991:ix). This renewed concern with culture in foreign language



teaching is attested by a number of studies produced in the last ten years, as for example, in North America (Seelye 1984, Valdes 1986, Damen 1987, Kramsch 1993, Stern 1992: Chapter 8), in Britain (Byram 1988, 1989; Byram et al. 1991; Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991), Germany [cf. references and review in Buttjes and Byram (eds.) 1991, Chapters 4 and 5], and France (Zarate 1986). Underlying this new emphasis on culture are different notions - albeit not always explicitly stated - of 'education', 'ideology', and 'culture' itself, as well as different views of language and language teaching/learning. The overall preoccupation seems to be, however, that culture teaching should be rescued from its background - and atheoretical - status, and given a legitimate place in language pedagogy and in education as a whole.

Before attempting to review recent work in the area and identify these current trends, it may be necessary to consider the phrase 'cultural studies', as used most notably by Byram and his fellow researchers at the Durham Project.<sup>21</sup> In Byram's own words (1986:322):

*[Cultural Studies] refers to that aspect of language teaching which exposes learners to another way of life by 'situating' the target language in one or more of the countries where it is spoken as a mother tongue.*

Elsewhere, Byram (1989:3) expands the scope of the term as follows:

*(...) let me say more precisely what I include under the label 'Cultural Studies'. Every foreign language lesson includes some spoken and written text and usually some visual image which refer to a particular foreign way of life. The reference may be ignored by teacher and learner, as they attempt to describe their own work using the foreign language (...) Thus under the term 'Cultural Studies' I refer to any information, knowledge or attitude about the foreign culture which is evident during foreign language teaching. 'Cultural Studies' is taught*

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<sup>21</sup>'The Durham Project': An empirical research project carried out at the University of Durham for three years from April 1985, entitled "The Effect of Language Teaching on Young People's Perceptions of Other Cultures".



*and learnt both overtly and implicitly, both consciously and incidentally, in much the same way as other components of the overt and hidden curriculum, and thus merits thorough discussion in curricular terms.*

Apparently, the term refers to what is called 'Landeskunde' in Germany, 'civilisation' in France, or 'background studies' in Britain. Yet, as Byram points out, "none of these concepts as they are at present put into practice is an adequate response to the need to teach language as part of and a key to the experience of a different culture". Though recognizing that the phrase 'cultural studies' is not an ideal substitute for 'background studies', Byram (1988:17) believes it to be an improvement, "provided it is taken to refer to all aspects of culture as a way of life, to include all those dimensions which an anthropological ethnography, a history of art, crafts and literature and contemporary social and political history would describe".

What may seem a minor terminological quibble is in fact a means for Byram to introduce the phrase 'cultural studies', (re)define the field of interest, and underline the educational and political dimension of foreign language teaching by bringing culture to the fore:

*The educational value of foreign language teaching, from elementary to advanced level, depends crucially on cultural studies, but on cultural studies which does not merely provide background information to language learning in a supposedly neutral way without comment or criticism. The responsibility of language teachers for introducing learners to another culture involves them in decisions which are educational and political. (Byram 1988:17)*

As implied in the quotations above - and is amply demonstrated elsewhere in his work - Byram believes that a principled approach to cultural studies may provide practitioners and policy makers with a theoretical justification and the means to operationalize the common assumption that language learning may "raise



understanding of and reduce prejudice towards other cultures and peoples". As Byram (1989:51) puts it:

*The claim that language teaching improves intercultural relationships is therefore potentially justifiable if changes are made in the teaching of culture as an integral part of the subject.*

While it is true that 'cultural studies' in language teaching is still trying to establish itself as a distinct field of enquiry and is thus likely to display a tendency to "the recourse to philosophy and to debate over fundamentals" (Kuhn 1970:91), there are also signs of an emerging consensus of views and interests among researchers and language teachers in general.

Reviewing what he calls the 'intercultural debate in language teaching', Buttjes (1991a) identifies three broad areas of considerable agreement and overlap. The three areas and some of the corresponding notions identified by Buttjes are worth quoting at length, for they may be indicative of the directions taken by the intercultural debate in the last ten years. Thus, for the participants of the (on-going) debate on culture in language teaching:

1. *The comprehensive nature of intercultural learning means:*
  - *that learners' identities must be respected as starting-points and receiving ends in intercultural mediation;*
  - *that language teaching can be only one of several influences on the formation of intercultural competence;*
  - (...)
2. *The interdisciplinary approach of intercultural studies assumes:*
  - *that ethnographic observation is useful both in constructing teaching material and in training teachers;*
  - *research and learning must include a critical evaluation of established cultural values and academic disciplines;*
  - (...)
3. *The transnational scope of intercultural language teaching envisages:*
  - *that mediating languages and cultures requires cross-cultural comparison and, finally, transcultural values;*
  - (...)



*- that national and cultural loyalties may be questioned  
in the process of intercultural language learning.  
(Buttjes 1991a:12-3)*

It has been suggested (Stern 1992:206; Byram et al. 1991:2-3) that this broad theoretical consensus has not been coupled with any attempts to treat culture systematically in language classes. Byram adds that "it is also debatable whether the amount of discussion in Germany has produced a significance influence on practice, any more than has been the case in other countries". For Stern, "the reasons for this discrepancy lie in certain difficulties presented by culture [teaching] which have tended to be glossed over in the literature".

Stern (1992:222) goes on to identify - and suggest ways to deal with - such difficulties as the vastness of the culture concept; the specification of goals and content of culture teaching; and, perhaps more important, "the absence of resources, the lack of cultural research, the patchiness of documentation, and the overall shortage of systematic descriptive accounts of cultural data".

By "[shifting] focus away from language as such towards the people who use the language: where and how they live, what they think, feel and do", Stern discusses the principles of what he calls the 'cultural syllabus'<sup>22</sup> of a language curriculum - but not without a sobering introduction:

*It should be stated at the outset that we will not recommend a single and universal policy for culture. The policy is likely to vary depending on circumstances, types of students, and goals. What we will concern ourselves with are grounds on which such a policy can be justified, and how we can best develop arguments for deciding what policy to adopt in a given situation. (Ibid. p. 20)*

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<sup>22</sup>In Stern 1992 "the term *syllabus* is used to refer to content components of the curriculum, and the term *curriculum* itself more globally to refer to the plan for teaching a language" (ibid. p. 20).

Though developed within the wide-ranging perspectives of linguistics, the history of language teaching, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and educational theory, Stern's scholarly argumentation barely touches upon those questions which make culture in language teaching such a sensitive topic, to be avoided by some and 'problematized' by others. Early indications of a trend towards the latter position came from Germany, where the legacy of *Kulturkunde* has contributed to the politicization of the debate.

Reviewing current practice in Germany, Buttjes (1982, as summarized and translated in Byram 1988:323-4, and 1989:18.) identifies three positions or orientations on 'Landeskunde'. The first, which he calls 'pragmatic-communicative', involves teaching about the culture to alleviate problems of communication the learner might have to face when visiting a foreign country. This is the 'tourist-consumer' view of a foreign culture, typical of a certain brand of communicative language teaching. The second, termed the 'ideological-understanding' orientation, aims to give students a critical understanding of the foreign people, of their own view of themselves and their values. This orientation is more frequently found in advanced language and literature learning, or in some forms of higher education, e.g. through the study of a country's history and economy. The third is the 'political-action' orientation whereby learners are encouraged to respond critically and/or politically to the foreign culture.

Although Buttjes' classification was devised against the backdrop of the German context, it is revealing of current trends in language education in other countries - and in the teaching of writing in special - where the 'politics of pedagogy' has been recognized as an emerging tradition (Raines 1991). Particularly challenged by those who take an openly political stance towards language education (as for



example, Auerbach 1986, Auerbach and Burgess 1985, Pennycook 1989, Peirce 1989, Benesch 1983) is the notion that some kinds of teaching are safely apolitical while others are dangerously ideological. The general tone of this debate has recently been summarized as follows:

*The recent introduction of poststructuralist perspectives on language and radical theories of schooling that view language teaching as a political act is a long-awaited development in TESOL. Such theories enjoy much currency in L1 circles, almost becoming the orthodoxy in areas like composition teaching, with words like discourse and empowerment becoming clichéd and posing the danger that they might have lost their critical edge. TESOL, on the other hand, while being a far more controversial activity, has managed to see itself as safely 'apolitical' due to its positivistic preoccupation with methods and techniques. (Canagarajah, 1993:601)*

Canagarajah's paper deserves further consideration here in that it challenges some problematic interpretations of the workings of dominance and resistance in educational settings - interpretations which may well hinder attempts to explain the complexities of classroom realities. Although acknowledging the pioneering function of Pennycook's (1989) and Peirce's (1989) papers which have helped to expose the underlying ideologies in TESOL, Canagarajah is also critical of the way these writers deal with the issue of domination and resistance in ESOL classrooms.

*Whereas Pennycook's delineation of ideological domination through TESOL appears overdetermined and pessimistic, Peirce's characterization of the possibilities of pedagogical resistance appears too volitionist and romantic. (...) What Pennycook overlooks in the process is that the classroom is a site of diverse discourses and cultures represented by the varying backgrounds of teachers and students such that the effects of domination cannot be blindly predicted. Such classroom cultures mediate the concepts defined and prescribed by the Western academy as they reach the periphery. (Ibid. p. 602)*



In Canagarajah's view, both Pennycook and Peirce have, in different ways, failed to acknowledge the *relative autonomy*<sup>23</sup> (cf. Giroux 1983) of the school from other social institutions and processes:

*If Pennycook has to attend to the noun in the term relative autonomy, Peirce has to note the adjective. That is, the attitudes, needs, and desires of minority communities and students are only partially free from the structures of domination in the larger social system.*

(Ibid. p. 603)

It seems to me that to the notion of *relative autonomy* one should add Gramsci's view of the hegemonic as 'an active process' with highly complex internal structures. As Williams (1977:113) puts it:

*[Hegemony] does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own.*

I believe the debate on culture in ESOL (and elsewhere) would benefit greatly if this view of 'a lived hegemony' (cf. discussion in section 2.1.3 above) should replace what appears to be the prevailing view of - in Williams's (ibid.) terms - "a static hegemony, of the kind which is indicated by abstract totalizing definitions of a dominant 'ideology' or 'world-view'".

A related controversial area in this debate has to do with the alleged neutrality of ESP teaching and some (other) forms of communicative EFL teaching, a neutrality guaranteed by the 'acultural' nature of English as an international lingua franca and/or by its universal functional value:

*At the international level (...) English is essentially acultural: it is the medium for subcultures which cut across national and political boundaries. (...) The introduction of English as the most widespread*

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<sup>23</sup>For 'relative autonomy' see also Althusser 1971, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' in *Lenin and Philosophy, and other Essays*, New Left Books.



*first foreign language in primary education throughout Europe and further afield is based on its universal functional value rather than on any wish to expose children to the 'culture' of anglophone societies. At this [international] level, then, English 'culture' is not involved.*  
(Bowers 1992:30)

Others - as Byram (1989:59), for example - would rather refer to "the special nature of English as the dominant language of international communication as a result of large-scale colonisation, past and present". As Byram's statement announces, what is at stake now in the debate on culture is the question of power and ideology (for example, Alptekin and Alptekin 1984, Holly 1990, or Phillipson 1990).

Since some of the arguments offered by Alptekin and Alptekin (opus cit.) in their influential paper seem to strike a familiar chord in the EFL teaching scene in Brazil, they will be now discussed in more detail.

Viewing culture teaching as potentially leading to cultural colonization, Alptekin and Alptekin suggest that 'successful bilinguals' should replace monolingual and monocultural native English-speaking teachers as pedagogical models, and that "local and international contexts which are familiar and relevant to students' lives should be used in EFL teaching". Though their suggestions (see also Widdowson 1990:112-114, 1988:19-20; Brumfit 1980:85-97) do resonate the feelings and disposition of so many of us - qualified EFL professionals, in Brazil and elsewhere - their arguments seem to falter at least in two respects.

The first has to do with their initial assumptions, stated as follows:

*Two conflicting pedagogical views exist in teaching EFL abroad. One, promoted chiefly by native English-speaking teachers, is that English teaching should be done with reference to the socio-cultural norms and values of an English-speaking country, with the purpose of developing bilingual and bicultural individuals. The other, advocated by the host country where English instruction takes place, is that the teaching of English should be independent of its nationality-bound cultural context,*



*with a view to creating bilingual yet not necessarily bicultural people.*  
(Alpetkin and Alpetkin 1984:14)

They criticize the first position for its implied claim that language and culture are inextricably tied together and that one cannot learn one without the other, a claim which rests on 'the empirically unverified theory of linguistic relativity'. Yet, by resting their own argumentation on the assumed 'mismatch between the host country's and the guest teachers' patterns of thinking and behaving' (p.17), Alptekin and Alptekin lay themselves open to the same criticisms surrounding Whorfian claims. Though generally supporting the second position, that the learning of the target language should be dissociated from its nationality-bound cultural context, they also state that:

*The native English-speaking teachers of EFL who come to the host country naturally reflect the trends of their own culture in foreign language pedagogy, and believe that teaching the target culture is a sine qua non of teaching the target language.* (Ibid. p. 15)

They go on to say that those teachers are bound to make "unwitting efforts to disseminate among their students the cultural norms and values of the English-speaking country as part of their foreign language teaching" (Ibid. p. 16) Indeed, what seems to be implied is that professional behaviour is 'nationality-bound', rather than being a reflection of one's expertise/training and of his (political and other) beliefs.

It seems to me that their case for a locally-based culture teaching (i.e. in terms of teaching staff and pedagogical models) is also undermined by their implied view of 'culture' as a monolith with a rather homogenous configuration. In this view, conflicts in the (re)production of culture are only likely to occur when two 'national' cultures meet. In most cases, as Alptekin and Alptekin seem to suggest, the result is fairly predictable - if not *determined* in advance:



*Indeed, being at the receiving end of a virtually one-way flow of information from Anglo-American centers, the host country runs the risk of having its own culture totally submerged, and thus imposes restrictions in educational and cultural domains to protect its way of life. (Ibid. p. 15)*

#### **2.2.4 An educational perspective**

As the discussion so far seems to indicate, the wide scope of cultural studies and its necessarily interdisciplinary nature underline the pressing need to provide language teaching professionals (of all origins) with a principled approach to the understanding of cultural phenomena from a *pedagogical* perspective. In what follows, some recent contributions (Byram 1989, and 1991; Byram et al. 1991; Byram and Esarte-Sarries 1991; Kramsch 1993) to the development of such an approach will be discussed, with special reference to what they may offer to the examination of current practice.

Byram's 1989 book (see also Byram 1988; Byram and Esarte-Sarries 1991; Byram et al. 1991) contains some of his "efforts to clarify how the educational value of foreign language teaching can be made more available and accessible to learners and teachers alike" (p. vii). Starting from the position that cultural studies is an integral part of language education, Byram proposes "a framework for discussing current practice and developing future practice and theory together" (1989:3). This framework (cf. Byram 1989:4-6, 1988:22-3; and Byram et al. 1991:3-4) comprises four areas of enquiry and addresses issues as diverse as:

1) the educational value of cultural studies and its precise relationship to foreign language teaching and to education as a whole;

2) the development of a pedagogy of cultural studies which would include cultural analysis for pedagogical purposes and a theory of cultural learning in a foreign language classroom;



3) the methodology and techniques of teaching "ways of knowing about culture" (p.6), and the related issue of teacher training;

4) criteria for assessment of individual learning and evaluation of the whole process of cultural studies teaching and learning.

By drawing primarily on insights from social anthropology, ethnography (Goodenough 1964, Sperber 1985, Geertz 1975, for example), and on "the psychological traditions established by Vygotsky" (Wertsch and Stone 1985; Vygotsky 1971) as well as on schema-theory (Rumelhart 1980), Byram proposes a four-dimensional model for language and culture teaching, and briefly deals with questions of implementation.

On the whole, Byram's model can be said to be the most consistent contribution to date to the development of a theoretical base for the teaching of culture in foreign language education. It is also a complex and ambitious model, comprising four dimensions of language and culture teaching - *Language Learning*, *Language Awareness*, *Cultural Awareness* and *Cultural Experience* - which should interrelate as follows:

*Language Learning is supported by Language Awareness work on the language in question (...), and by direct experience of the foreign culture inside the classroom, and especially in carefully structured visits to the foreign country. That experience would also be open to be analytic, comparative inspection through Cultural Awareness work in the mother tongue. The relationship between cultural meanings and language in its social and psychological aspects would form the link between Cultural and Language Awareness work, enabling learners to see how cultural meanings embodied in the foreign language are learnt by acquiring the language itself. (Byram 1988: 29-30)*

In his 1989 book, where his model is developed in more detail, Byram recognizes that "the implementation of a model developed from theory will doubtless be more problematic than an approach based on the modification and development of



existing practices" (Ibid. p. 136). It is also true that in the context of foreign language teaching in secondary schools in Europe and perhaps North America, particular socioeconomic and even geopolitical characteristics may allow for the operationalization of such ambitious model. But even in these privileged educational contexts, the lack of resources for the development of a pedagogically adequate cultural theory and the problem of teacher expertise may hinder attempts at curricular innovation, especially one that draws on disciplines and methods (e.g. social anthropology and ethnography) which are not familiar to language teaching. Byram recognizes these difficulties and subscribes to the solution proposed by Bruner (1966) that "teachers become learners alongside their pupils, superior in certain learning skills and, more important, in their understanding of the rationale of the process in which they are all engaged". He goes on to say that "foreign language teachers have usually acquired considerable knowledge of the culture they teach, even if it has been through incidental learning rather than as part of their professional studies. They need a framework of theory to give their knowledge shape and to help them make pedagogical decisions"<sup>24</sup>.

Thus, Byram believes that the development of a theoretical framework for culture teaching is needed not only to inform future practice but also for the examination of the routines of current practices. The Durham project (see Note 21) is an example of empirical research which drew on such 'framework of theory' to investigate "the effect of language teaching on young people's perceptions of other cultures".

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<sup>24</sup>Cf. 'Man: a Course of Study' (MaCoS) (1968-70) and Bruner, J.S. (1966) *Toward a Theory of Construction*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.



Two questions seem to guide Byram's main argument: What is culture? Is it possible to understand and describe a foreign culture? He finds the answer to the first question in Geertz's (1975:89) '*symbols-and-meanings*' conception of culture<sup>25</sup>. Byram favours Geertz's formulation for a number of reasons, mainly because:

*(...) this view clearly puts language, as one of the principal carriers of meanings, at the centre of an account of a particular culture, and reinforces the argument (...) that language teaching inevitably involves teaching culture. In this view, to teach culture is to teach the systems of meanings and the symbols which carry the meanings, symbols both linguistic and non-linguistic. (...) In this [symbols-and meanings] view, individuals acquire a competence to interpret social phenomena and to determine their own behaviour in ways which are consonant with the meaning systems shared by all members of a society. (Ibid. pp. 43-44)*

As Byram's argument goes (ibid. p. 94), the answer to the second question - whether it is possible to understand and describe a foreign culture - "must be a qualified yes. In so far as language is part of a culture and can capture cultural meanings and experiences (...) then it is possible to interpret and describe the culture in its language. The language holds the culture through the denotations and connotations of its semantics. The [next] question is then how successfully the culture can be described in another language".

The Whorfian undertones in his main argument become more evident as Byram rests his case for culture teaching/learning in the foreign language classroom on the proposition that since "individuals' experience of cultural meanings is reflected in the semantics of their language" (p. 86), cultural phenomena are better described and presented in the classroom (p. 96) "from within the semantics of the language".

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<sup>25</sup>Geertz defines culture as 'an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life' (1975:89; cited in Byram 1989:43).



As Kramsch (1990:104) points out in her review of Byram 1989:

*[Byram's] semantic view of cultural meanings is insufficient to make a strong case for the link between language and culture. It has to be supplemented by a view of language in discourse, where the social organization of speech between speakers and hearers, writers and readers, reflects in itself relationships of distance, power, and solidarity indicative of a specific social group with a specific history and place in a specific society".*

This view of 'language in discourse' is central to Kramsch's work on culture in language teaching, as demonstrated in her 1993 book - a book which takes "a philosophy of conflict as its point of departure, thus reversing the traditional view of language teaching as the teaching of forms to express universal meanings" (Kramsch 1993:1-2). Seeing language as social practice and culture as the very core of language teaching, Kramsch argues for a redrawing of the boundaries of foreign language study:

*Its main goal can no longer be the one-sided response to national and economic interests, and the pursuit of communicative happiness; it must include the search for an understanding of cultural boundaries and an attempt to come to terms with these boundaries. (Kramsch 1993:12)*

By arguing from the standpoint of "a critical language pedagogy that values dissent, dialogue, and double-voiced discourse" (cf. Freire 1970, 1985; Giroux 1988, Pennycook 1990, Kanpol 1990, and Bakhtin 1986, for example), Kramsch places herself in line with the third, 'political-action' orientation identified by Buttjes (cf. discussion above). Thus, she challenges the traditional belief that foreign language teaching should bridge cultural gaps and argues for a focus on the understanding of boundaries instead: "We can teach the boundary, we cannot teach the bridge" (p. 228). She also examines attempts to build 'cognitive', 'professional', or even 'ideological' bridges across cultural barriers (i.e. 'the fallacy of structuralism', 'the fallacy of expertise', and 'the fallacy of democratic pluralism') to show how they have fallen 'short of their promise' (pp. 225-228).



When considering current practice she identifies three main directions, as related to three different views of culture.

The first has focused on cultural information (e.g. institutional structures and facts of 'civilization'; the classics of literature and the arts; the foods, fairs, and folklore). She criticizes this view of culture for favouring facts over meanings thus leaving learners "blind to their own social and cultural identity and implicitly assuming a consensus between their world and the other" (p. 24).

The second direction has situated culture "within an interpretive framework, taken from cross-cultural psychology or cultural anthropology, using universal categories of human behavior and inferencing procedures for making sense of foreign reality". Culture is here identified with 'national culture with slight variations'. Again, Kramsch (ibid.) believes this to be a 'consensual model' since it shows differences without addressing "the conflicts and the paradoxes that ensue from these differences".

In her view, there is a third - more recent - direction which "sees culture both as facts and as meanings, but sees it as a place of struggle between the learners' meanings and those of the native speakers". Within this perspective, "the cultural context of the target society contains enough predictability to ensure an understanding of meanings (...) but it is by no means restricted to these meanings" (ibid.). This view is in tune with the spirit of what she calls 'the post-structuralist era of the 1980s and 1990s:

*[In this era] the notion of national culture itself has become significantly more differentiated than it used to be in the times of easily identifiable, monolithic nation states. Moreover, advances in pragmatics and in sociolinguistics have shown how unreliable our very frames of reference are. In the multiple everyday face-to-face interactions, in the daily dialogues between men and women, in the minute realization of speech acts, language is used to inform, persuade, imply, but also to misinform, deceive, obfuscate, and control peoples'*



*thoughts and actions - that is, to create a cultural context that is both enlightening and confusing. (Ibid. p. 224)*

It is to this third direction that she hopes to contribute by arguing for a 'dialogic breakthrough' in foreign language pedagogy whereby the language classroom is viewed as "a culture of the third kind, in which learners can express their own meanings without being hostage to the meanings of either their own or the target speech communities" (ibid. p. 14). In an analogy with the dialogues which take place between ethnographers and members of a speech community during anthropological fieldwork, Kramsch argues that:

*The language classroom should (...) be viewed as the privileged site of cross-cultural fieldwork, in which the participants are both ethnographers and informants. In the course of this fieldwork, two kinds of dialogue are likely to occur: the first is an instructional conversation in which forms are practised and the status quo of the school's educational culture is confirmed and validated; the second is an exchange of ideas and emotions through language, which has the potential of putting in question the status quo. (1993:29)*

She believes that new ways of looking at the teaching of language and culture have emerged in the last decade or so as a result of 'a general rethinking of the role of language as social practice'. Rather than viewing the teaching of culture as the transmission of information about the people of the target country, their general attitudes and world views, as in mainstream foreign language education, the perspective today is that "a large part of what we call culture is a social construct, the product of self and other perceptions" (ibid. p. 205).

Thus, in the perspective adopted in her book, 'cultural reality and cultural imagination' are both taken into account:

*On the reality of facts and events that constitute a nation's history and culture is superimposed a cultural imagination that is no less real. This cultural imagination or public consciousness has been formed by centuries of literary texts and other artistic productions, as well as by*



*a certain public discourse in the press and other media. (...) The teaching of culture is all the more difficult as myth and reality both contradict and reinforce one another. (...) And yet, myths cannot be discarded, for they affect the way learners of a foreign language see others in the mirror of themselves, despite all evidence to the contrary from 'objectively' transmitted facts. (1993:207)*

As she sees it, culture teaching should contain at least 'four different reflections of facts and events', whereby C1 (the native culture) and C2 (the target culture) are "themselves aggregates of a multifaceted reality, representing many different subcultures (generational, occupational, regional, age, race, or gender-related)". Her approach to cross-cultural understanding thus accounts for a 'kaleidoscope of C1 and C2 perspectives'. She argues that it is the role of cross-cultural education to add a further perspective onto this multifaceted reality and enable learners to define for themselves "[a 'third place'] in the interstices between the cultures the learners grew up with and the new cultures he or she is being introduced to" (ibid. p. 236).

Kramsch's approach to the question of culture in the language classroom is undoubtedly the most congenial to the perspectives on culture and language pedagogy taken in this thesis. However, whereas Kramsch refers to classroom occurrences as a means of illustrating her definitions and showing the potential and limitations of current practices, I intend to take a different route and look at classroom practice throughout a whole school semester in the hope to discover the meanings 'culture' might take on along this process. Such route of investigation is typical of ethnographic research, as discussed in the next chapter.



## Chapter 3

### Ethnography: Principles and Problems

In order to clarify the links between methodological procedures and research questions in this study, it may be necessary to begin by considering some of the main issues related to the development of ethnography as a research method in educational settings, together with its main principles and problems.

#### 3.1 Ethnography and ethnographies

Originally developed in anthropology as a method to describe the culture of unknown ethnic communities, ethnography has gradually attracted the interest of researchers in different fields of the social sciences and expanded its sphere of application into education where, at times, the school or even a particular classroom is regarded as an identifiable 'culture' with its own characteristics.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:2) attribute the growth of interest in ethnography to the "disillusionment with the quantitative methods that have for long held the dominant position in most social sciences". Social researchers turned to ethnography as an alternative way of studying "the meanings that give form and content to social processes". Hammersley (1980:48) notes that in Britain, classroom ethnography soon became the methodological complement to the 'new sociology of education' that emerged in the late 60's and in the 70's. According to Hammersley, the well-established 'positivistic' social-psychological tradition of classroom research was rejected by the new sociologists on a number of grounds, "in particular its lack

of sensitivity to the ways in which the perspectives of teachers and pupils generate patterns of classroom interaction ".

In a review of sociolinguistic research<sup>26</sup> in both the UK and the US, Cazden (1985) relates the work developed in Britain by the 'new sociologists of education' (e.g. Young 1971) to the same ethnomethodological sources as the work of Cicourel (1974) and his colleagues. She also notes that in the US, the work in ethnomethodology and in 'conversational analysis' (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974) bears close relation to the development of 'the ethnography of communication' (Hymes 1962, 1971 and 1972; Cazden et al. 1972; Gumperz and Hymes 1972). Among the strands of classroom research in the UK identified by Cazden (1985:234) is also "the work of educational researchers who were critical of American P.P [process-product] research and believed that ethnography and linguistics could contribute to the study of classroom talk" (as for example Stubbs and Delamont 1976, Stubbs 1983, Delamont 1983, Stubbs and Hillier 1983).

In a similar vein, Watson-Gegeo (1988:575) notes that ethnography has become "fashionable in both educational and ESL research because of its promise for investigating issues difficult to address through experimental research, such as sociocultural processes in language learning, how institutional and societal processes are played out in moment-to-moment classroom interaction, and how to gain a more holistic perspective on teacher training and improve practice".

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<sup>26</sup>Cazden (1985:433) contrasts 'sociolinguistics' (Sc) or 'descriptive' research based on ethnographic observation with the process-product (P-P) tradition, the distinction being based on "the presence of qualitative analyses of actual classroom talk".



There is thus sufficient evidence in the literature for the view of ethnography as being initially an opposition movement and, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:1) point out:

*(...) it is in the nature of opposition movements that their cohesion is more negative than positive: everyone agrees, more or less, on what must be opposed, but there is less agreement on the nature of the alternative. Thus, (...) there is disagreement as to whether ethnography's distinctive feature is the elicitation of cultural knowledge (Spradley 1980), the detailed investigation of patterns of social interaction (Gumperz 1981), or holistic analysis of societies (Lutz 1981). Sometimes ethnography is portrayed as essentially descriptive, or perhaps as a form of story-telling (Walker 1981); occasionally, by contrast, great emphasis is laid on the development and testing of theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Denzin 1978)*

After considering these different views of ethnography, van Lier (1988:54-55) suggests that they could be placed

*[...] on a continuum that ranges from strong to weak in terms of theoretical power (...). In the strong view, ethnography is theory-building, and is the core of a humanistic approach to social science. (...) In the weak view, currently prevalent in L2 research, ethnography is a tool consisting basically of unstructured (as opposed to systematic, i.e. using pre-determined codes) observation, used to identify relevant concepts, describe variables, and ultimately generate testable hypotheses.*

He rejects the weak view since "it reduces ethnography to exploratory observation (whether participant or non-participant)". However, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:22) remind us, research can serve a number of different functions and the more descriptive form of ethnography can be extremely valuable, "not least because it may open up to challenge the preconceptions that social scientists bring to research". This is how Nessa Wolfson (1986:693), for example, views the role of ethnography in the study of speech behaviour:

*One of the enormous advantages of an ethnographic approach is that the hypotheses come out of the process of collecting and analysing data. After looking at a particular speech setting, event, or act and*



*gathering as much data about it as possible, one looks to see what the patterns and rules of interaction are. Sometimes what is found is counterintuitive (...).*

In fact, she goes on to argue for a "two-pronged" approach toward data-collection and analysis which makes use of ethnography in its capacity of exploratory "systematic" observation:

*(...) it is safer to begin by systematic observation and to allow hypotheses to emerge from the data themselves. Then an elicitation instrument can be developed which is sensitive to what has been found to occur in actuality, and the hypotheses which have emerged can be tested for generalizability and validity. (Wolfson 1986:697)*

### **3.2 On validity, reliability, and 'reality'**

As in any research which is observation based, the related issues of validity and reliability are problematic in ethnography since they imply assumptions about the nature of reality and the relationship between the researcher and the object of the enquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1985:37), for example, contrast 'positivist' and 'naturalist' axioms. They argue that whereas positivist researchers assume that "there is a single tangible reality out there [...which] can be predicted and controlled", researchers working within the 'naturalistic paradigm' believe that "there are multiple constructed realities (...) so that prediction and control are unlikely outcomes although some level of understanding (*verstehen*) can be achieved". As Lincoln and Guba go on to say, in the positivist paradigm "the inquirer and the object of study are independent" whereas in the naturalistic version they "interact to influence one another".

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:3) take a different stand on this issue and argue that attempts to conceptualize ethnography methodologically in terms of 'naturalism', or more rarely, 'positivism' fail to recognize that these apparently



conflicting views "share a fundamental misconception: they both maintain a sharp distinction between social science and its object". These authors rest their argument on the notion of reflexivity to offer "an alternative reconstruction of the logic of ethnography" whereby "this confrontation between those who claim or deny the validity of scientific knowledge by fiat is undercut" (ibid. p. 234).

### **The notion of 'reflexivity'**

The notion of 'reflexivity' - as Hammersley and Atkinson see it - is thus fundamental to assessments of validity and reliability in ethnographic research. Though these issues are more frequently addressed in relation to the problems of measurement in quantitative methods, they take on a particular form in classroom observation. A central feature in ethnographic fieldwork, observation can take a number of forms, ranging from "complete participation" to "complete observation" (cf. Junker 1960, Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). In classroom research, the researcher can take part in the interaction covertly, as teacher or learner (the participant observer) or overtly (the observer participant). It is more common for classroom researchers, however, to take the role of non-participant observer. As Hammersley and Atkinson point out, the effect of the researcher's presence must be acknowledged in every case (cf. the "observer's paradox", Labov 1972:209). Instead of trying to become the unobtrusive fly-on-the-wall or even a "neutral vessel of cultural experience", the researcher should rather recognize the reflexive character of social research: that it is part of the social world it studies. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:14-5) round up their argument by stating that "in this sense, all social research takes the form of participant observation;

it involves participating in the social world, in whatever role, and reflecting on the products of that participation".

To a certain extent, charges of lack of validity and reliability can be related to the fact that the early enthusiasm for ethnography as an 'alternative' to quantitative research in education was not accompanied by a concern with method. Not surprisingly, much "shoddy, poorly conducted, and ill conceived fieldwork was legitimated by the ethnographic 'mantle'" (Rist 1980:8). Moreover, as Hammersley points out elsewhere, it has been difficult to "break with conventional ethnographic practice founded on naive realism" without lapsing into the "self-refuting character of relativism" (Hammersley 1992:49, and 54). However, a considerable number of theoretical discussions and actual accounts of ethnographic work in educational settings (for example Adelman 1981; Trueba et al. 1981; Saville-Troike 1982; Hymes 1981; Cazden 1985; Erickson 1985; Watson-Gegeo 1988; van Lier 1988; Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Hammersley 1990, and 1992) have demonstrated that classroom ethnography can no longer be regarded as "a euphemism for anecdotal reports of subjective observational activities" (van Lier 1989:42). Together with calls for a methodological self-awareness in ethnographic research (for example, Atkinson and Delamont 1986) there has been a pressing need to respond to various criticisms levelled against the 'unscientific' conduct of ethnography in education:

*These criticisms need to be addressed in a fundamental way if we seek to define the potential role and value of ethnography in second language education. If we fail to address them we may contribute to an unnecessary polarization of research interests and a consequent trivialization of the problems that face the profession of language education, and education in general. (van Lier 1989:41-42)*

Reactions to the early charges of lack of objectivity and reliability in accounts of classroom behaviour have stressed the inevitably selective nature of any description



of the social world and the particular role of *intersubjectivity* in research which deals with the complexities of human interaction. This is the view expressed by van Lier (1988:46) when he notes that since "no observation is value-free or theory-free (...) our observing and subsequent describing of what goes on will necessarily be selective. We must therefore be explicit - in so far as we can be - about the reasons for selection and aware of the incompleteness of our description". He goes on to state that important though the issue of objectivity is, the crucial issue lies elsewhere, i.e. in the relation between observation and description: "That relation is one of interpretation and its value must be assessed in terms of truth". Thus, adherence to what he calls the "principle of truth-as-agreement" would be a requirement for the transformation of classroom research into a "rigorous discipline" where the term *objectivity* is replaced by the term *intersubjectivity* "to denote observer-observed relationship".

In fact, it is generally agreed that a major task of ethnography is "to understand what sociocultural knowledge participants bring to and generate in the social setting being studied". Besides, since some of this knowledge is implicit "a significant task of ethnography is therefore to make explicit what is implicit and tacit to informants and participants (...)" (Spindler 1982:7). In classroom research, this 'view from within' (Brend 1974) or *emic* standpoint<sup>27</sup> is not obtained through 'objective' observation of pre-selected categories - as is the usual practice in, for example, *systematic observation* and *interaction analysis* (Flanders 1970). Instead, as van Lier (1988:56) points out, this emic knowledge "derives from the study of meaning that participants

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<sup>27</sup>Leo van Lier (1988:17) notes that one of the clearest statements of the original intended meaning of Pike's conceptual distinction, emic/etic, is made by Brend: "*The emic and etic standpoints are alternate ways of viewing the same reality. The etic standpoint is a view from outside, either random in its selectivity or with a set of presuppositions that have only a chance relationship to the scene being described. The emic standpoint is a view from within that notices just those features of the scene that are marked as significant by internal criteria*" (Brend 1974:3).



invest and develop in the social context of the classroom, as manifested through their interaction and various kinds of documentary evidence (such as interviews, conversation, lesson plans, notes, and so on)".

Another related area of criticism concerns the fact that the idiosyncratic nature of ethnography does not permit generalization. This is how Spindler begins to address this issue in the context of educational ethnography:

*(...) ethnographic inquiry by its nature focuses on single cases or at most on a limited setting of action. Thus there are searching questions about using ethnographic data for scientific generalization, as well as for policy formation and decision-making. There are answers, of course. For example, ethnographers feel that an in-depth study that gives accurate knowledge of one setting not markedly dissimilar from other relevant settings is likely to be generalizable in substantial degree to other settings. Ethnographers also usually feel that it is better to have in-depth, accurate knowledge of one setting than superficial and possibly skewed or misleading information about isolated relationships in many settings. In other words, the results obtained by survey methods that educational decision-making has often been based on are ethnographically suspect because they have been distorted by the fractionalization of inquiry and by ignoring meanings shared by informants. (Spindler 1982:8)*

Following a similar line of reasoning, other researchers have addressed the issue of generalizability by emphasizing "the holistic nature of ethnography and distinctive nature of information discovered, which consequently is not covered by the assumptions of statistical assessment" (Woods 1986:49). In their much quoted attack on *interaction analysis*, Delamont and Hamilton also oppose a concern with generating data which can be statistically generalized to a holistic treatment of classrooms. They argue that a researcher who uses a holistic framework

*(...) accepts as given the complex scene he encounters and takes this totality as his data base. He makes no attempt to manipulate, control or eliminate variables. Of course, [he] does not claim to account for every aspect of this totality in his analysis. He reduces the breadth of enquiry systematically to give more concentrated attention to the emerging issues. Starting with a wide angle of vision, he 'zooms' in*



*and progressively focuses on those classroom features he considers the most salient. Thus, ethnographic research clearly dissociates itself from the 'a priori' reductionism inherent in interaction analysis.*

(Delamont and Hamilton 1976:12-13)

A different line of argument is adopted in the context of ethnography as theory-building. In fact, generalization and comparison are basic procedures in the construction and testing of theory. As Atkinson and Delamont (1986:249-250) point out:

*The development of ethnographic work in sociology and anthropology rests on a principle of comparative analysis. If studies are not explicitly developed into more general frameworks, then they will be doomed to remain isolated one-off affairs, with no sense of cumulative knowledge or developing theoretical insight.*

In other words, Atkinson and Delamont relate the questions of generalization and comparison to the process of theory-building by stressing the importance of *generic analytic categories* in this process, i.e. "abstract, ideal-typical, notions which characterize features, problems and issues which may be common to a range of different concrete settings".

The issue of *construct validity* is often raised in this context of ethnographic research that moves beyond the description of unique instances to the development of a valid theory of wide scope. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) consider two ways in which the problem of "the validity of the lines of inference running between data and concepts" takes on a particular form in ethnography. First, "the generation and development of concepts is not a purely logical and conceptual exercise. There must be constant recourse to the data". Thus, unlike the question of validity in quantitative research,

*(...) what is involved is not simply a question of finding indicators for a concept. Rather, there is an interplay between finding indicators and conceptualizing the analytic categories. This derives from the inductive,*



*reflexive character of ethnography where the process of analysis involves the simultaneous development of constructs and indicators to produce a 'fit' between the two.* (Ibid. pp. 184-185)

The second distinction they make is related to what is sometimes discussed in the quantitative methodological literature under the heading *reliability*. Hammersley and Atkinson go on to identify the traditional concern with reliability with the desire to find standard indicators for concepts. They note that the underlying assumption in this concern with standardization is that equal responses to the same stimulus are 'commensurable', so that inferences can be drawn that ignore the effects of the research process itself. Thus, once this behaviouristic assumption is replaced with the principle of reflexivity, the link between concepts and data may be seen as "an artefact of the research process itself" and the presentation of standard indicators becomes unnecessary." The point Hammersley and Atkinson (ibid. p. 186) make is that

*if it is a theory of wide scope, it will be able to predict phenomena quite different from those in relation to which it was originally developed. Dependence on a single set of standard indicators would be highly suspect. What is required is that the theory be explicit in its prediction of what will occur under given conditions. The question of whether and when those conditions hold can, and indeed must, be a matter of subsequent investigation.*

Moreover, in moving between data and concepts researchers should be able "to note plausible alternative links to those made in the emerging theory (...) It is [also] important to make explicit and examine those assumptions [underlying the alternative links] to which strong challenges can be made" (ibid.).

### 3.3 On settings and cases

The process of selecting a classroom as the research site involves practical considerations about the conditions of access and the feasibility of carrying out



research in a setting traditionally regarded as a particularly 'messy' source of data (cf. van Lier 1988, Long 1983). It is important to note, however, that in this thesis the classroom is not taken for the object of study, and no claims are here made as to 'studying a natural setting'. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:43) point out:

*(...) settings are not naturally occurring phenomena, they are constituted and maintained through cultural definition and social strategies. Their boundaries are not fixed but shift across occasions, to one degree or another, through processes of redefinition and negotiation.*

In their view, there is another reason why it is potentially misleading to talk of 'studying a setting' and important not to confuse the choice of a 'setting' and the selection of a 'case' for study:

*(...) even in the most descriptively oriented study the case investigated is not isomorphic with the setting it takes place. A setting is a named context in which phenomena occur that might be studied from any number of angles; a case is those phenomena seen from one particular theoretical angle. Moreover, a setting may contain several cases.*  
(Ibid. p. 43)

It is thus equally important to adopt appropriate strategies in selecting cases for study:

*In ethnography, decisions must be made about where to observe and when, who to talk to and what to ask, as well as about what to record and how. In this process we are not only deciding what is and is not relevant to the case under study but also sampling from the data available in the case. Very often this sampling is unwitting, but it is important to make the criteria employed as explicit and as systematic as possible (...)* (Ibid. pp. 45-6)

As Burgess (1982:75) reminds us, "a common error has been to equate sampling with survey research and to assume that field research does not involve any form of sampling". In fact, sampling in field research may take a number of forms which may or may not involve statistical sampling, as for example, 'probability/non-probability sampling', 'theoretical sampling' (Glaser and Strauss 1967), 'non-



interactive/interactive sampling' (Denzin 1970). No matter which form it takes, sampling may be said to begin somehow in the selection of a research site and should become more systematic in the process of selecting cases for investigation.

Again, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:46) argue that sampling is equally important within cases where it occurs along three major dimensions: *time*, *people* and *context*. They stress the importance of using the temporal context of actions to make sense of them and note that "data, of whatever kind, recorded at different times need to be examined in light of their place within the temporal patterns, short or long term, that structure the lives of those being studied" (ibid. pp. 193-4). Besides, since obvious practical problems prevent researchers from conducting fieldwork round the clock, some degree of time sampling must be attempted for an adequate coverage of whatever significant changes which may occur over time in the phenomena under study. For example, in order to sample the activities and events that occur over a forty-five minute lesson "ethnographically" and at the same time gain some understanding at the rhythm of that particular classroom, the researcher may try to utilize the same temporal framework in terms of which the participants organize their English lessons (e.g. 'homework-checking' time, reading time, 'conversation' time, group-work time, or even time for "having a laugh" (cf. Woods 1979, 1981). Moreover, every field researcher should avoid any wide gap between the period of observation and the time devoted to the recall and actual recording of data. A practical problem arises in this respect since the production of fieldnotes, the transcription of tapes (see discussion below), the indexing and filing of material and the writing of reflexive notes are all extremely time-consuming activities. A solution to this problem



requires a recognition of the limitations and incompleteness of all description (and/or representation of 'reality' for that matter) as well as some degree of time sampling.

Besides sampling across time, it is important to decide about who are to be the representative actors in the population under study. Such sampling may be undertaken either in terms of standard 'face-sheet categories' (i.e. according to gender, social class, educational background, etc.), or by reference to 'categories of theoretical relevance'. These categories are linked with the collection of data and the development of theory, and they are usually classified as either 'member-identified' or 'observer-identified categories' (Lofland 1976). The first term is used to refer to "typifications that are employed by members themselves, that is, they are 'folk' categories that are normally encapsulated in the 'situated' vocabulary of a given culture. 'Observer-identified categories' are types constructed by an observer" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:50).

The third dimension along which sampling may occur is referred to by Hammersley and Atkinson as 'context':

*Taking account of variations in context is as important as sampling across time and people. Within any setting people may distinguish between a number of different contexts that require different types of behaviour (...) It is important, however, not to mistake places for contexts. If we are to ensure that we are not led into false generalizations about attitudes and behaviour within a case through contextual variability, we must identify the contexts in which people in the setting act, recognizing that these are social constructions, not physical locations, and try to ensure that we sample across all those that are relevant. (Ibid. pp. 51-2)*

For Erickson (1981:148), "contexts can be thought of as not simply given in the physical setting (...) nor in combinations of persons (...). Rather, contexts are constituted by what people are doing and where and when they are doing it". He goes



on to refer to *social contexts* as "interactionally constituted environments [which] are embedded in time and can change from moment to moment".

Of course, what is meant by 'context' can vary greatly in language classroom research. A distinction between a micro and a macro<sup>28</sup> view is drawn, for example, by van Lier:

*The macro view would be inclined to look at home-school relations, L1-L2 relative status, learners' attitudes and reference groups, and so on. The [micro-view] might be described as discoursal or interactive context (or context-in-performance), the latter as social-cultural context.*

(van Lier 1988:7)

He also points out that "context in classroom research often means the context of interactional talk in the classroom". Although he finds this contextual view a "considerable advance over narrowly linguistic, cognitive or behavioural approaches", he recognizes the need for studies of the wider - relatively unexamined - context in the field of foreign/second language classroom research.

This research hopes to contribute to the examination of the wider 'socio-cultural' context but one which, within a Bakhtinian perspective, is undistinguishable from van Lier's 'discoursal' or 'interactive' contexts. Such extended view may pose specific problems to research, not least as regards decisions about what aspects of context to represent in the transcripts of recorded talk. This is how van Lier summarizes the problems involved in constructing transcripts:

*Whatever the choices, there are limits to the amount of detail that can be put in. The more detail, the less readable the transcript - it may*

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<sup>28</sup>The distinction between micro and macro social contexts in research on classroom discourse is also made by Cazden, as in this often-quoted statement: "In considering how talk unites the cognitive and the social, we have seen that 'social' has two interrelated meanings: the microsociological meaning of the situation of which talk is a part, and the macrosociological meaning of stratifications within society - by class, ethnicity, sex, etc. Research on classroom discourse that can contribute to increased equity as well as increased quality needs to consider both sets of variables" (Cazden 1985:458).



*become some abstract confusion of symbols, decipherable only by its creator - the less detail, the greater the likelihood that important information may be missed. There is no solution to this problem: the transcriber opts for some reasonable balance between accuracy and simplicity, and must be prepared to defend that balance. Yet, when the transcript is ready (if ever it is), the data have been sifted and transformed into static print. (van Lier 1988:80)*

It seems to me, though, that the issue of transcription involves much more than the formidable search for a 'balanced' system which should render the data accessible to the scrutiny of other analysts. What is urgently needed - though not widely acknowledged by researchers - is a greater concern for the theoretical underpinnings of the transcription process. In one of the rare attempts in the literature to discuss 'transcription as theory', Elinor Ochs (1979:45) points out that "one of the consequences of ignoring transcription procedures is that researchers rarely produce a transcript that does reflect their research goals and the state of the field. Furthermore, [they] are unable to read off one another's transcripts the underlying theoretical assumptions".

In a similar vein, Mishler (1984:33) addresses this issue by attempting to "make the task of transcription problematic; to make explicit the gap between speech and text, and thereby uncover the issues involved in constructing transcripts (...) that are used as the basis for analyses and interpretations".

A recognition of the problematic and selective nature of transcription is thus a first and necessary step in the search for a set of conventions that should be able to render the data accessible to the scrutiny of other analysts without at the same time making implicit claims to objectivity and completeness (Cook 1990).

These and other controversial issues in ethnography will be taken up again in the course of the analysis of the data in this study (see Part Two). For the moment,

it may be sufficient to point out that in spite of the diversity in theory and practice of ethnographic research there appears to be a consensus among researchers studying human behaviour in its social context on the status of ethnography as a valuable method of enquiry.

In what follows, I shall provide an account of the ethnographic route taken to turn the initial research problem into a set of questions to which a 'theoretical' answer will then be given. Whether this answer will be "a narrative description of a sequence of events, a generalized account of the perspectives and practices of a particular group of actors, or a more abstract theoretical formulation" (cf. Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:32-3) is a matter for later consideration.



## PART TWO: THE STUDY

### Chapter 4

#### An Ethnographic Route

##### 4.1 Design: purpose and means

When designing the research I had a two-fold concern in mind:

i) that it should provide the means for the investigation of the process whereby the members of a particular educational culture construct the (cultural) content of their EFL lessons/syllabus;

ii) that it should reflect the dialogic (Bakhtin 1981, 1986 *inter alia*) perspective on language - and by extension on culture and education - taken in this thesis and incorporate methodological procedures to capture the multiplicity of voices which populate the classroom.

The option for an ethnographic approach thus seemed most adequate on several counts, not least for the knowledge ethnography has accumulated into ways of probing unknown cultures, and - in the ethnography of schooling - for its knowledge of ways of 'making the familiar strange and interesting again' (Erickson 1985:121). Moreover, as a systematic means of gaining understanding of 'multiple-constructed realities' (Lincoln and Guba 1985:37) through the process of description (cf. Blot 1991:203) and/or interpretation, ethnography is here taken as the methodological counterpart to the dialogic perspective inspiring this thesis.

In what follows, an account will be provided of the ethnographic route taken in this research - a route that begins with the selection of the research setting and an

outline of fieldwork. But first it is necessary to provide an overview of the educational context in Brazil so as to begin to bring background voices of the local educational culture to the fore.

## 4.2 Context: The education system in Brazil

From 1971<sup>29</sup>, the Brazilian school system comprises eleven years of education, of which the first eight years - the First Grade (*'Primeiro Grau'*) - are compulsory. The First Grade, intended to offer 'fundamental schooling' (*ensino fundamental*) to all between the ages of seven and fourteen, is divided into two stages of four years each, corresponding to the former Primary School and the Junior Secondary School (or *'Ginásio'*), respectively. The Second Grade, which corresponds to the former Senior Secondary School (or *'Colégio'*), provides three to four years of what is also referred to in the current legislation as 'middle-level' schooling, i.e. one that should be suitable either for university entrance or for the middle-level work-force needs of the economy.

It should be noted that the 1971 'Law of Directives and Bases for Education' abandoned the dichotomy *primary x secondary* in favour of the terms First Grade and Second Grade, whereby the First Grade is meant to encompass the whole period of eight years of compulsory education, referred to as year 1, 2, 3, successively. After year 8, the counting starts again (i.e. as Year 1, 2, 3), perhaps to mark off the rather special status of the Second Grade. However, regardless of the intention on paper as to the democratic provision of eight years (instead of four years, as in the previous

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<sup>29</sup>The law (no.5692) which has defined this basic framework for education in Brazil has been in legal force, without any substantial modifications, since 1971. Changes are expected, however, with the enforcement of the latest 'Law of Directives and Bases for Education' which has been drawn to meet the requirements of the new Brazilian Constitution, promulgated in 1988.



legislation) of 'fundamental' education to all, the former break between primary school and the first stage of secondary school is still felt in various respects - not least as regards the curriculum. It is from year 5, for example, that foreign language teaching is most likely to occur, as will be shown below. For this and other (mostly operational) reasons which will soon become clearer, the period of schooling comprised between the end of (the former) primary school and the end of (the former) secondary school will be henceforth identified in this thesis as year 5, year 6, successively, till year 11 - unlike the current use in Brazil.

University entrance is decided by a written examination known as the 'Vestibular'. Universities of both the public and the private sector require their candidates to sit for several written papers, which may vary in type and level from university to university and according to the major areas of study selected by the student beforehand. In every case, a foreign language (usually English) examination is required and its results may be decisive in guaranteeing a place at the best universities.

Education is financed by both public and private funds and - notwithstanding the large number of Brazilians who have never had access to schooling - every Brazilian is constitutionally entitled to free First Grade or 'fundamental' education. The sources of public sector expenditures are the federal government, the states, and the municipalities. The administration of education is also carried out on these three levels: federal, state, and municipal. On the federal level, the responsibility for policy decisions, planning, and administration rests with the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and with the Federal Education Council (CFE). In addition to its normative functions towards the federal education system, the Council is the ultimate

normative authority for the national system of education - that is, *all* Brazilian education: private as well as public, secular as well as nonsecular. Schools of the public-sector - though notoriously neglected by educational authorities - are officially run by the states or, less frequently, by the municipalities ('municípios'). There are also a few schools in the public sector - e.g. the school in this study - which are the direct responsibility of federal authorities and are thus maintained and regulated by the central government in Brasília.

Curricula for all schools - of both the public and the thriving, highly commercialized, private sector - are decided by the individual states on the basis of fairly broad criteria set by the Federal Council of Education<sup>30</sup>. By the same token, decisions on the *specific teaching programme* (i.e. the 'syllabus') for the various subjects which integrate the curriculum are taken at school level, observing the stated general objectives for education and for each broad curricular area<sup>31</sup>. The language of instruction at all stages of schooling must be Portuguese, i.e. 'the national language', and its teaching should be given special emphasis in the First and the Second Grades both as 'an instrument of communication and as expression of Brazilian culture' (Cf. Law 5692/71, art. 4, par. 2; and analysis of the 'official' education voices below).

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<sup>30</sup>The so-called 'full' curriculum for all First and Second Grade schools comprises a set of 'common core' disciplines and a diversified part which should account for local/school/ individual diversity. In fact, besides establishing the disciplines which should constitute the 'common core' curriculum, the Federal Council of Education also defines the scope and objectives of each broad curricular area. The State Councils in turn define the disciplines for the 'diversified' part, without establishing, however, any official syllabuses.

<sup>31</sup>It has been pointed out that the current legislation stresses both the 'uniformity of objectives' and the 'plurality of teaching programmes'. (Cf. "*Diretrizes para o Aperfeiçoamento do Ensino/Aprendizagem da Língua Portuguesa*". MEC, Jan. 1986, p.15)



### 4.2.1 The place of foreign languages in the curriculum

The regulations in legal force (see discussion in chapter 5) at the time of the field research state that the core of disciplines common to all schools should include at least one foreign language. A distinction is drawn, however, between the curriculum of First and Second Grade schools. Thus, the teaching of a foreign language is only 'recommended' in the First Grade - preferably from Year 5 - whereas in the Second Grade the foreign language has the status of a compulsory subject with a fundamental role to play in the 'development of learners' linguistic performance [in L1]<sup>32</sup>. It should also be noted that it is left for each State Council of Education to decide which foreign language(s) should be included in the curriculum. Regardless of faint recommendations 'on paper' as to the provision of a wider choice of languages, it is not unusual for English to be the only foreign language on offer in most schools. In the state of Rio de Janeiro, for example, even though there is explicit mention of French and Spanish as alternatives to English in documents issued by local educational authorities<sup>33</sup>, no provision has been made for the schools to reverse the 'English only' status quo, nor to guarantee the minimum conditions for the actual teaching of any foreign language, for that matter. As an immediate result of this sheer - not to say deliberate - negligence of those who are constitutionally responsible for the democratic provision of education in the country, foreign language instruction is *de facto* in the hands of private language institutes (or 'English courses')<sup>34</sup>, being thus further

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<sup>32</sup>Cf. *Operationalization of Resolution CFE No. 6/86*. Federal Education Council, 1986.

<sup>33</sup>Cf. *Opinion CEE/RJ No.122/84*. State Education Council, Rio de Janeiro, 1984.

<sup>34</sup>Pupils and teachers alike refer to these private language institutes as 'the English course', or just 'the course'. Alternatively, they are called by their names and acronyms, the most common being '*Cultura*' (short for *Cultura Inglesa*), *IBEU* (*Instituto Brasil-Estados Unidos*), *BRASAS* (*Instituto Brasil Americas*), *CCAA* (*Centro de Cultura Anglo-Americana*), *Britannia*, and '*Curso Oxford*'.



removed from the context of a democratic, general/'fundamental' education. Moreover, since the thriving business of private language schools is mostly regulated by 'market forces' rather than by educational parameters, it is not surprising that the hegemonic position of English - the 'international language of commerce and communication' - over less 'marketable' languages should be consolidated at a time when the 'transnational economy [has] established its grip over the world' (Hobsbawm 1994). Meanwhile, the little debate in the media and in certain language education quarters in Brazil about the primacy of English over other foreign languages in the curriculum has more often been impaired by corporatism, (national) chauvinism, and/or ethnocentrism under various guises<sup>35</sup> than it has been marked by more sobering attempts<sup>36</sup> to address the issue of multilingualism in general education.

The significance and pervasive presence of the aforementioned private 'English courses' in the school context under study will be identified below as one of the various 'voices' resonating in the FL classroom. For the moment, it is worth noting that in schools catering for more affluent pupils who also constitute the typical clientele of private language courses, it is not uncommon for decisions on materials and course content to reflect the prevailing 'methodological' trend in those courses. Moreover, in the absence of any principled foreign language education policy, or of any concern on the part of authorities with the improvement of FL teacher education in the country, there is always a danger that school teachers - for lack of expertise, time, or even professionalism - might surrender their responsibility for syllabus and

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<sup>35</sup>Cf. discussion of documents on curricular legislation below.

<sup>36</sup>Moita Lopes (1993:290) points out that in the past two decades there has been a "concern with critical awareness of the role of EFL as the hegemonic foreign language [in Brazil]". It should be noted that such concern has been articulated most forcefully in his own work (particularly 1982, 1991, 1995).



materials selection to ELT publishers' representatives and that the adopted textbook might become the surrogate syllabus. This danger is less likely to exist in secondary state schools, not least because the cost of glossy imported textbooks makes them virtually prohibitive for the average (usually low middle-class) pupil, who gets no governmental assistance for school materials.

In this (and perhaps other) respects, the school in our study - though maintained by federal government funds - cannot be said to be representative of Brazilian state schools, as will be demonstrated below. In fact, it seems to share some characteristics with certain rare, 'quality schools' of both the public and the private sector. Yet, bearing in mind that in ethnographic studies any generalizations can only be validated against a detailed account of the particularities of the research context, it is necessary at this stage to provide an overall description of the research setting in this study.

### **4.3 Setting: Selection and particularities**

As stated above (3.3.2.1), the process of selecting the research site always involves practical considerations about the conditions of access and the feasibility of carrying out research in a 'natural' setting traditionally regarded as a particularly 'messy' source of data (cf. van Lier 1988, Long 1983).

In this study, a secondary state school in Rio de Janeiro (here called *Ipanema*, a pseudonym<sup>37</sup>) was selected as the research setting for opportunistic reasons which also proved to be methodologically adequate. Since I believe - with Hammersley and

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<sup>37</sup>To protect the anonymity of the school and people involved in this research pseudonyms have been used throughout.

Atkinson (1983:55) - that access problems can be used as a source of analytic insights, I shall now provide more details about entry negotiations in this study.

In 1991, I became involved in a classroom-focused research project as part of my activities as a university teacher. Since one of my main concerns as a researcher has to do with the Brazilian school of the public sector - notoriously neglected by educational authorities and researchers alike - my intention was to focus on the EFL classroom of a 'typical' state school. (The characteristics of Brazilian schools of the public sector will be made clearer in the next section). I then set out to establish the first contacts with state school gatekeepers but on two occasions negotiations for entry did not go past the head teacher, who did not show much appreciation for 'researchers' or 'academics' alike. A third attempt took me as far as the 'best English teacher in the school', as the head master put it. We had two long informal conversations during which this English teacher told me, among other things, that she had been a research subject the year before and that, despite the positive feedback she had been given, she was not willing to go through the whole process again. Besides, when she learnt of my interest in the topic of culture in EFL lessons, she replied that she had long given up any hope to deal with cultural information in her lessons. The reason, as she went on to say, was that unlike the pupils who used to come to state schools in 'the good old days', her present pupils could not even recognize the 'simplest cultural references' in their texts, that is, 'references to popular drinks such as vodka or gin - let alone learn Shakespeare!' (i.e. 'high Culture'/culture *proper*). It was then that - pressed by time and further motivated by the way teachers and gatekeepers alike had reacted to the mention of the word 'culture' - I turned to *Ipanema* school where I knew beforehand access problems would not arise. The work



I then developed there - even though not designed as a pilot study for this project - has provided me with sufficient information about the school so that it could be singled out as a suitable research setting.

Yet, the selection of *Ipanema* may have methodological implications in this study on at least two counts. The first has to do with its peculiar status as compared to other Brazilian state schools, as suggested above. The second has to do with my own status there, or rather, with my professional and academic links with that school, which may have facilitated access on the one hand and complicated field relations, on the other. This and other factors affecting the assessment of generalizability and ‘*reflexivity*’ (see pp. 69-70 above) in this study will be dealt with later. What is needed now is a closer look at *Ipanema* itself.

#### 4.3.1 The Ipanema school

*Ipanema* is one of the few schools in the public sector which is run by federal educational authorities rather than by the local state or municipal authorities. Originally set up to be the training site of university students working for a teaching degree, *Ipanema* established its reputation as a progressive/non-conformist school during the sixties and seventies when the teaching staff and the pupils alike found ways of resisting the pressures put upon the educational system by the military dictatorship which ruled the country for over two decades. In fact, given the socio-political context and the fairly recent move towards democratization in the country, it is not surprising for this study to find the overall educational ethos in Ipanema to be inimical to ‘control’ and thus broadly identified with the educational philosophy which Skilbeck (1982) terms ‘progressivism’, particularly as regards its concern with

individual creativity and growth through experience.

With its teaching staff predominantly drawn from the most prestigious local universities, its location in one of the most affluent areas of the city, its status as one of the few remaining representatives of the 'good old' schools of the public sector, *Ipanema* still attracts pupils who would most commonly be found in the prestigious private schools nearby.

As for the place of foreign languages in the school curriculum, the situation at *Ipanema* is again unrepresentative of other state schools which, in most cases, can hardly manage to offer what is made obligatory in the legislation - that is, one foreign language (usually English) and at Second Grade/Higher secondary school level only. At *Ipanema*, however, *both* English *and* French are *obligatory* in the last four years of the First Grade, whereas from the first year of the Second Grade (see pp. 94-5) pupils are allowed to choose between English and French. About two thirds of them tend to drop French then, in spite of the fact that they usually study English privately, outside school. In fact, when it comes to learning English - and regardless of its compulsory status in the school curriculum - *Ipanema* pupils do the same as most middle-class pupils in Rio and go to a private language school (or 'English course') in search of 'the real thing', leaving school teachers with the added burden of being at the less privileged end of an unexplicit two-tier system.

Despite being located in one of the most affluent areas of the city, the actual buildings of *Ipanema* school bear little resemblance with the modern, purpose-built, bright and usually well-maintained buildings of the neighbouring private schools with similar middle-class 'clientele'. Instead, the crumbling, makeshift arrangements which house *Ipanema* bear the marks of the long years of neglect to which authorities have



subjected state schools in the country.

Yet, *Ipanema* can be fairly situated amongst the few remaining ‘quality’ state schools in the country, which - as a result of decades of under-funding and lack of political will, to say the least - have gradually been put out of the reach of the majority of the population.

The school functions in two daily shifts - from 7:00 to 12:40 for Years 5 to 11, and from 13:00 to 17:40 for the first four years of the First Grade. There are usually two classes of approximately 30 pupils each per Year (for example, Year 5A, 5B; 6A, 6B; 7A, 7B, and so on). When it comes to English, however, from Year 6 there is a re-allocation of the regular-sized classes into two groups of about fifteen pupils per class (that is, Year 6AI and 6AII, 7AI and 7II, and so on). Though the only overt criterium for such selection is the pupil’s final results in his/her first year of English at school (i.e. Year 5), what happens in fact is that those pupils who do English outside and/or have the ‘been-abroad experience’ are also the ones who are placed in the upper level. In fact, despite efforts on the part of the staff to minimize the effects of streaming within an otherwise non-streamed (i.e. yearly) school system, it is common for pupils themselves, and even for some teachers, to refer to their group/class as the ‘weaker’ or the ‘stronger’ one (cf. analysis of *interviews* below). Another, more visible, sign of this two-level system is the actual physical dislocation of half of the class for the foreign language lesson. English is taught twice a week, in fifty-minute lessons which are in fact shortened by the need of half of the pupils to leave their usual classroom and re-assemble in the classroom assigned for their English lesson/‘level’. Other implications of such re-grouping for the class/pupil culture will be discussed in more detail below, and in its relation to the outside

‘English course’ culture which pupils (and in some cases even the teacher) bring to the classroom. But before we can move to the classroom proper, that is, before turning our focus of attention from the background - or rather, the ‘backstage’ - to the site where pupils and teachers ‘enact’ their roles and ‘re-accentuate words of others’, it is necessary to provide an outline of the methodological procedures which have enabled us to hear and make sense of this multivoiced classroom dialogue.

#### **4.4 An overview of the fieldwork**

When planning the fieldwork I attempted not to lose sight of the need to strive for adequacy between the purpose, means, and underlying ‘theory’ in this research. Thus, in the initial plan for fieldwork there was an attempt not only to make adequate use of the potentiality of ethnography as a classroom research method but also to account for the problematic nature of the process of achieving access to the necessary data in a type of research which seeks to explore the categories used by the participants - and by the ethnographer - "to construct and to understand their sociocultural world" (Blot 1991:204). Moreover, the unusually favourable conditions of access in this study had reinforced the need for the researcher to recognize the reflexive character of social research: that it is part of the social world it studies (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:14-5). In this sense, as Hammersley and Atkinson go on to say, "all social research takes the form of participant observation; it involves participating in the social world, in whatever role, and reflecting on the products of that participation". It was necessary then to ensure that the effect of the researcher’s presence should be acknowledged from the outset (cf. the "observer’s paradox", Labov 1972:209), particularly in a classroom study in which the observer - though ‘non-participant’ - is



so familiar to/with the setting as to be taken for a regular ‘member’ of the school community (cf. analysis of the *observation notes* and *research journal* below).

Besides, I tried to bear in mind that methodological procedures should be taken from the outset so as to allow for the operationalization of the notion of ‘multivoiced’ syllabus. This notion is here taken to be productive in that it encapsulates both the view of the classroom as a complex of heterogeneous, overlapping cultures as well as the view of content (cultural or other) as resulting from the ‘dialogic’ nature of classroom discourse and thus able to appropriate and transmit - simultaneously - multiple views of culture.

An outline of fieldwork was then drawn so as to keep the focus on the classroom as a significant - though not the only - source of data. *Observation* was thus the central research procedure and the researcher’s field notes the basic instrument for recording observational data. Where the conditions allowed, field notes would be supplemented by audio-recording (and transcription). However, other instruments and research procedures - e.g. ‘technique triangulation’ - would be needed to allow for the operationalization of the notion of voices, on the one hand, and to enhance the potential validity of the description, on the other.

Fieldwork was initially planned to be carried out during the first school semester in 1993 - i.e. from beginning of March to end of June. As it happened, it did not end until the end of July since the school had to reschedule its activities to make up for a twenty-day interruption (in May) caused by a nationwide teachers’ strike - not an unusual event in that particular culture, by the way. On the whole, however, the initial plan proved to be flexible enough to accommodate changes required by the peculiarities of the foreign language timetable at *Ipanema*, and by those eventual



operational problems inherent to the nature of single-handed ethnographic research.

The first three weeks were devoted to informal meetings and brief unstructured individual interviews with all five members<sup>38</sup> of the English teaching staff, and to periods of observation in different EFL classrooms. Three particular groups were then selected for intensive observation during the rest of the semester: 7A-II, 7B-II (here called Class 7), and 11-III (or Class 11), all in the 'upper' level of English within their classes, taught by the same teacher. The reasons motivating this selection will be made explicit below, when research instruments and data collection are described in more detail. At this point, it is necessary to provide a brief account of how the main concepts in this study were made operational through ethnographic research procedures.

#### 4.5 Operationalization of the main concepts

One of the procedures used by classroom ethnographers to bring multiple perspectives onto the research problem and thus enhance the validity of their findings is the one known as 'technique triangulation'<sup>39</sup> whereby observational data is compared with data produced from interviews, group discussions, school documents and instructional materials. In this research, this procedure was also found to be a reliable means to

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<sup>38</sup>At the beginning of the fieldwork there were six teachers in the English Department and they were each given a code-name as follows: Teacher A/Ana; Teacher B/Beatriz; Teacher C/Cristina; Teacher D/Diana; Teacher E/Elizabeth; Teacher F/Fernanda. In the second week of the school year, Teacher B, who had a temporary contract, left the school for a better, more secure position elsewhere and her place was not filled in until late in the semester when it was too late to include the new teacher in the research.

<sup>39</sup>In fact the procedure used was an unorthodox combination of technique triangulation with what is referred to in the literature as 'data triangulation' (Denzin 1970:472) or 'data-source triangulation' which "*involves the comparison of data relating to the same phenomenon but deriving from different phases of the fieldwork, different points in the temporal cycles occurring in the setting, or, as in 'respondent validation', the accounts of different participants (including the ethnographer) involved in the setting*" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:198).



operationalize the main concepts under study.

Central to the study is the notion of syllabus content - cultural or other - as a multivoiced dialogue which should become more distinct as the course gradually unfolds. Thus conceived, the language syllabus resonates not only with the voices of members of the immediate classroom culture, i.e. teacher, pupils, and textbook, but also with the voices of those who have a more or less influential role to play in the local culture through their membership in the larger educational EFL context in the country. The latter are here broadly identified as the 'official' voices of language policy-makers/educational legislators, and the unofficial voices of private EFL courses.

Moreover, since the classroom is here regarded as a complex of cultures which are by no means homogeneous, static, or self-contained, some provision should be made in the study to account for 'simultaneous membership'. Expected to surface in the course of classroom work, for example, was the pupils' extramural membership in private English language courses, or in what I call the 'been-abroad' culture - a membership not often shared with the English class teacher. By the same token, teachers' voices could at times resonate more or less 'Brazilian' voices of the local EFL culture, and at other times sound together with the native English-speaking voices looming behind the latest 'authentic'/'communicative' material.

Stemming from the concept of *multivoiced syllabus* was then the need to operationalize 'cultural content' so as to account for the various meanings 'culture' might take on in the 'extended' educational culture(s) under study. Thus, no attempt was made to start from a well-rounded definition of 'culture', or of 'content', and proceed to investigate the amount of fit between that and classroom practice. Instead, the study sought to elicit and identify, as far as possible, the diverse views of culture

and cultural content held by the members of that particular classroom culture, and/or those views which might eventually emerge out of (the researcher's observation of) the day-to-day classroom work.

#### 4.5.1 Data collection and instruments

To make the main concepts in this thesis operational three main types of instruments for data-gathering were thus found necessary, and they will be each described in turn:

i) **Documents** - In order to account for the voices of policy makers, textbooks, as well as the less distinct voices of the local school culture, three types of documentary data were collected ranging along a dimension from the most formal/'official' to the most informal:

a) 'official' documents issued by educational authorities at federal, state, and local/school levels in the last three decades<sup>40</sup>;

b) textbooks and other instructional materials used by the classrooms under study;

c) 'miscellaneous'/various informal items of printed material (e.g. posters, notices, hand-outs, and fly-sheets) which were likely to contain relevant information about the school/classroom culture.

ii) **Interviews** - Three main sets of interviews were conducted, with teachers and pupils, at different stages of the research process. The first set consists of semi-structured, or reflexive<sup>41</sup> interviews with each of the five members of the English

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<sup>40</sup>That is, the *Law of Directives and Bases for Education* - or the 'Basic Law' of 1971 - was taken as a starting reference point.

<sup>41</sup>Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:112-3, 126) suggest the terms 'standardized' and 'reflexive' as a more adequate way to refer to the main difference between survey and ethnographic interviews than the traditional pair 'structured'/unstructured. They argue that 'all interviews, like any other social



language staff at *Ipanema*. All but one took place during the first three weeks of fieldwork and they were scheduled at each teacher's convenience, usually during a longer lesson break, though one teacher was interviewed after school. The duration of each interview ranged from twenty minutes (with Teacher F) to forty-five minutes (with the English language Coordinator/Teacher A, and Teacher D); the interview with Teacher C lasted forty minutes and Elizabeth (Teacher E) was interviewed twice, each time for about thirty-five minutes. With the teachers' permission, the interviews were audiorecorded, subsequently transcribed, and translated from Portuguese into English.

This first set of interviews constitute an important part of the data in that they provided an overall view of what teachers had to say about culture and the content of their EFL lessons, besides revealing the ways in which 'teaching voices' may sound at times in chorus and at other times 'in dialogue' with other voices of the educational context. These interviews were also designed to provide information about teachers' background and experience of English language teaching and learning. In addition, they helped me in the decision about which classes to select for the classroom observation. As it happened, all three classes were taught by the same teacher (here named 'Elizabeth' or Teacher E), for reasons that will be explained below.

The second set is constituted solely by interviews with this teacher. In fact, the core of this material has come from one in-depth interview designed to clarify certain topics selected from her first interview, but it also includes a series of informal, brief conversations between Elizabeth and the researcher. These were most often initiated by the teacher herself, immediately after a lesson or whenever she felt anything had

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interaction, are structured by both researcher and informant' and must thus 'be examined as social phenomena occurring in, and shaped by, particular contexts'.

come up during the lesson that might be of relevance to the study. Unlike the interviews proper, these informal comments were recorded in the form of on-the-spot notes subsequently appended to the observational notes (as ‘After-class comments’) or, alternatively, they were incorporated to the researcher’s journal.

Most of the material in the third set comprises reflexive/semi-structured interviews of various lengths, conducted in the beginning of the school year, with all but three of the forty-five pupils in the classes observed (15 in Class 7A, 16 in 7B, and 14 in Class 11). In addition, it includes a small number of group interviews with roughly one third of Class 7 pupils. All of the interviews in this set were conducted with a two-fold aim. The first was to provide information about the extramural experience of the pupils as English learners/users. The second was to find out how they perceived the content of their English language learning experience and whether they thought ‘culture’ might have anything to do with it.

Before being interviewed the first time, all pupils were asked to answer a brief, fairly open-ended questionnaire (see *Appendix A*) designed to provide a common general framework for the interviews. Owing to characteristics of Class 7 culture which have been taken into account in the analysis of the collected material, the second round of interviews took the form of hasty ‘last-minute comments’, as they were conducted during the last week of the semester, most often in a noisy patio during a break when the pupils’ level of interest for any school-related activity - e.g. answering questions about their English lessons - could not have been any lower.

**iii) Classroom observation** - The observations took place over the first school semester, from March 3 to July 19. Of the total number of 82 lessons Elizabeth taught these classes during this period, 54 lessons were observed: 40 in Class 7, and 14 in



Class 11. With the exception of the time I was introduced to the pupils and stood in front of the class to tell them about my work and ask for their cooperation for interviews throughout the semester, I would arrive a few minutes before the teacher (Elizabeth), sit at the back and take notes, as unobtrusively as possible. Since I had originally planned to supplement my notes with audio-recordings and Elizabeth had agreed to have her lessons recorded in any way I found necessary, I also tried to make sure that the flat (also supposedly unobtrusive) microphone attached to my small tape-recorder should be positioned so as to get a wider range of teacher-student and pupil-student interactions without causing much distraction. However, I soon found out that though not impeding the ethnographic rapport, tape recording was certainly impeded by the physical and pedagogical characteristics of these classes, which will become clearer in the analysis below.

As it turned out, only 3 hours and 30 minutes - corresponding roughly to four complete lessons - have resulted in taped material which was subsequently transcribed<sup>42</sup> and incorporated into the final text of the classroom observation notes. These also include brief comments offered by the teacher, either immediately after the observed lesson or during a coffee break in the staff room. Also incorporated into this material are my 'outside-class' notes (usually scribbled when I was alone in the staff room waiting for my next observation turn), which were originally meant to be kept separately in the 'researcher's journal'.

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<sup>42</sup>A note on transcription: Faced with the formidable task to produce a transcript that could not only reflect the research goals and render the data accessible to the scrutiny of other analysts but that could also be incorporated into an ethnographic narrative which is in turn part of a PhD thesis, I have decided to keep the transcription conventions to a minimum so that the text should read, as far as possible, as 'normal' written text. The conventions adopted for the presentation of the interview and classroom data are found in *Appendix B*.



Note-taking was thus the central instrument for recording the classroom observations which were initially aimed at obtaining as much information as possible about the actual content of instruction - 'cultural' or other - in those English classes. They were also guided by my own research agenda which included a belief in the possibility of allowing the participants to 'lead the way', as it were. As it happened, my first notes in Class 7 were structured after what later proved to be the participants' own characteristic way of structuring their lessons, that is, as a series of textbook-generated, oral-interactive 'activities'. The focus of subsequent observations was thus adjusted to account for the significance of those 'activities' for this particular classroom culture. But that is part of the analytic process, which is described next.

#### **4.5.2 Data analysis: general procedures**

It has been pointed out that data collection and analysis are not distinct stages in ethnographic research. As one observes, interviews, writes field notes and the research journal, analytic categories begin to take shape and should in turn inform subsequent data collection. Besides, bearing in mind that the process of organizing these various field notes as 'texts' can in itself constitute preliminary analyses (cf. Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:208), all throughout the fieldwork I tried to ensure that each morning of data collection should be immediately followed by a period in which, with the help of a word processor, I would type and organize the collected material under specific 'files', one for each kind of data (e. g. interviews, classroom observation, and so on). The material in Portuguese was stored in two versions, before and after translation, which was usually done immediately after the first version was available on disk.

Throughout this process, I did not lose sight of the need to organize the collected information into easily retrievable texts, for two main reasons. The first has



to do with a characteristic of the analytic process in this type of research which requires continuous manipulation of vast amounts of data. The second reason is related to my intention to provide a final ethnographic account with sufficient detail and abundance of data extracts so as to allow the scrutiny of other researchers.

Hence, in the presentation of the data in the following chapters, every example is followed by a reference in square brackets indicating its location in the researcher's files and notebooks. All the material is typed in space 1; the lines on each page are numbered from top to bottom, and the numbering starts again at the top of each new page.

The interview and observational data, for example, have resulted in 345 pages of typed text, distributed in three separate (ring-bound) notebooks, as follows:

1. Teachers Interviews: 84 pages
  - Teacher A: 17 pages
  - Teacher C: 15 pages
  - Teacher D: 19 pages
  - Teacher E: 29 pages
  - Teacher F: 4 pages
2. Pupils Interviews (13 in Class 7A; 15 in 7B; 14 in Class 11): 135 pages
  - Class 7 : 92 pages
  - Class 11: 43 pages
3. Observation Notes (and extracts from Researcher's Journal ): 126 pages
  - Class 7 (A and B): 96 pages
  - Class 11: 30 pages

Thus, the references in square brackets after each extract of the interview and the observation data in chapters 6 and 8 should read e.g.:

[T.E, 9:5-21] : Elizabeth's interview, page 9, lines 5-21  
 [C7A/9, 12:16-30]: Class 7A, pupil no. 9, page 12, lines 16-30

As for the 'official' documents, only relevant extracts were typed into the computer, first in the original version, i.e. in Portuguese, and then translated into English. The translated version was then used in the subsequent stages of the analysis.

The documents from which extracts were taken for the analysis in chapter 5 have been identified as Doc. 1, Doc. 2, Doc. 3, and so forth; the full bibliographical reference is provided in footnotes and in the bibliography.

It should be noted that even though the data were collected and ‘analyzed’ on a daily basis the bulk of the analysis was developed after the completion of fieldwork and with a view to reporting the ‘results’ within the parameters of a PhD thesis. The analysis was carried out by hand, though it would not have been possible for me to manipulate all the amount of data eventually collected without the help of the cut-and-paste resources of a word processor. All throughout the research process, I tried to engage in comprehensive data treatment in which material from all relevant sources were analyzed according to the principles and procedures of ethnography outlined above (see section 3.2), and briefly illustrated below.

I first read through the data several times and highlighted and/or marked with colour pens the segments of text, or salient features, which were then identified as potentially relevant to the understanding of the multivoiced syllabus construction in those classes. On the margins, I jotted down the first sematic labels for these emerging categories (e.g. English ‘for fun’ and ‘for real’; ‘real communication’; ‘activities-as-content’; ‘been-abroad’; ‘textbook-as-content’; ‘out-there reality’; ‘classroom reality’, the ‘rules of the game’, the ‘English course’, EFL culture). Some of these labels and then emerging analytic concepts are ‘member-identified’<sup>43</sup> (cf. Lofland 1976), i.e. they were used by participants themselves and were examined as clues to that particular educational culture. Others are ‘observer-identified’ categories, in Lofland’s (1976)

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<sup>43</sup>Lofland (1976) distinguishes ‘observer-identified’ categories from ‘member-identified categories’. The latter refers to ‘folk’ categories that are encapsulated in the ‘situated vocabularies’ of a given culture (cf. Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:50; also 3.2.2 above).



terms. I then typed a list of headings\semantic labels containing both the ‘folk’ terms and the researcher’s, with the corresponding page numbers and lines where the marked segments were located in the printed text. Using the wordprocessor, I grouped all the segments marked for the same category, making sure that each segment should be followed by an indication in brackets of its location on the printed page. It should be noted that all throughout this process I was not simply giving ‘voice’ to the participants in a non-analytic/reflexive way; instead, I tried to make sense of such emergent categories by consciously drawing on my prior knowledge of schools and of EFL classrooms similar and different from the ones observed. Likewise, I have drawn on the theoretical voices on culture and EFL classrooms informing this research to regroup and, in many cases, rename these member-identified categories (e.g. ‘for fun’ and ‘for real’ were both grouped under a higher-level category which I called ‘suspension of disbelief’; the ‘been-abroad’ and the ‘real communication’ categories were later found to be indicators of what is here termed ‘concern with reality’).

The next stage was to find links between those first analytic categories, and add new, more refined ones, by comparing each segment of data with other segments similarly categorized. This was done first within each set of data (i.e. interviews, classroom observations, documents, research journal) and then across the overall material. Such procedure was repeated a number of times so as to allow comparison of data derived from different phases of the fieldwork (and of the school semester). In so doing, I was also taking recourse to two types of triangulation - referred to in the literature as *data-source triangulation* and *technique triangulation* (cf. Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:198-9) respectively - in an attempt to enhance the validity of my account/interpretation. Threats to validity were also minimized by looking for any



dissonant voices, any counter-examples which could disrupt any emerging patterning or regularity. For example, having provisionally identified the ‘textbook-as-content’ as a category or initial analytic concept which could be used to explain how Class 7 dealt with the task of constructing their syllabus, I went on to look across the data for any instances of behaviour which could disconfirm the teacher’s and/or the pupils’ dependence on the textbook. As we shall see below, there are variations among the range of uses to which the textbook is put in the observed classes, and they can be mapped in the interview and observational data from both Class 7 and Class 11. The next stage was then to account for such variations in the developing ‘model’ of analysis. In this way, the first broad categories were gradually refined into more easily identifiable patterns which provided the framework for the final interpretation/analysis. It should be noted, however, that though rigorous procedures were adopted throughout the whole research process with a view to drawing theoretical conclusions, no claims are here being made that the resulting account should be taken as a robust ‘theory’ of any kind. In fact, the ethnographic route in this research has taken us somewhere along the road between description and theoretical development. Hence, the account in this thesis is offered as one, tentative way of approaching the question of culture in EFL lessons by trying to make sense of the multivoiced EFL syllabus as it unfolds in the classroom.

In what follows, each one of these major voices will be presented in turn and their order of appearance reflects the gradual adjustment of the ethnographic zoom lens as the analysis moves from the larger educational context in the country, and then on to the school, where the voices of the EFL teachers and pupils are first heard outside class and, finally, in the context of their daily work in the classroom.



## Chapter 5

### Analysis of Official Documents

#### 5.1 Additional bearings: value systems in language education

For the purposes of the analysis of documents<sup>44</sup> on Brazilian school curricula, the notion of 'multivoiced syllabus' (see Chapter 1) is coupled to Clark's (1987:xii) view of a language curriculum as "a function of the inter-relationships that hold between subject-specific concerns and other broader factors embracing socio-political and philosophical matters, educational value-systems, theory and practice in curriculum design, teacher experiential wisdom and learner motivation". Moreover, given the diverse and conflicting values that exist within any educational culture, it follows that the meaning 'culture' takes on in a particular EFL classroom should be viewed against that particular learning context which is in turn expected to 'ventriloquate' or 're-accentuate' (Bahktin 1981, Holquist [ed] 1981) the value-systems permeating the broader EFL/ educational context.

An analysis of what constitutes the language curriculum in the case under study - i.e. the set of general guidelines issued by educational authorities for the teaching of languages (L1 and FLs) at national and local school levels - will thus be undertaken in an attempt to identify the official educational voices in the Brazilian documents. More precisely, the analysis will focus on what those voices are saying about culture, language, and language teaching. In order to do this, I shall draw upon Skilbeck (1982; 1986), Skilbeck and Harris (1976), and Clark (1987), with particular reference

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<sup>44</sup>The document extracts presented in this chapter are my translation from originals in Portuguese.

to Clark's study of the way in which three broad value systems - originally posited by Skilbeck (1982) as *classical humanism*, *reconstructionism*, and *progressivism* - permeate the contemporary educational process and are reflected in the foreign language curriculum. As Clark (1987:1) relates each value-system to particular emphases which have tended to surface again and again in different language teaching contexts, at different times, he also highlights the fact that we are here dealing with extremely broad categorizations which are not "watertight compartments but rather constellations of differently inspired principles and practices, some of which overlap". With this proviso, he identifies 'an intellectual and artistic-literary or cultural bias' in classical humanism, 'a practical-communicative' one in reconstructionism, and 'an individual and group-development' emphasis in progressivism (ibid. p. 101).

Skilbeck (1982), and Skilbeck and Harris (1976) draw attention to the areas where the principles and practices of the three value-systems overlap. Reconstructionism, for example, shares important characteristics with both progressivism and classical humanism. With the first, it shares the conception of active learning whereby the acquisition of knowledge is an active, social process involving problem-solving activities "guided but not dominated by teachers". Taken over from classical humanism is the view of teachers as a highly-trained élite designated as "the agents of cultural renewal". Skilbeck and Harris (1976:36-40) also highlight common points between reconstructionism, the Enlightenment, and nineteenth-century democratic theory. All three systems of belief "grandiosely envisage the progressive social and economic amelioration, and the intellectual and spiritual advance, of humanity as a whole". Unlike the Enlightenment thinkers, however, modern reconstructionists do not believe in the inevitability of social and cultural progress



through the application of science to human affairs. Nor do they share with the Romantics the belief in innate human goodness. Rather, they believe in a rationally-planned 'pursuit of perfectibility', a process in which education has a fundamental role to play. Hence, in reconstructionist thinking, it is the teacher's job not merely to transmit cultural heritage but also "to undertake critical appraisals of the major attributes of modern cultures, and to work with groups in society for the renewal of that culture". Skilbeck and Harris (1976:40) go on to say that by contrast with both classical humanism and progressivism, reconstructionism requires subject-matter to be treated explicitly in terms of contemporary cultural issues and problems.

Skilbeck and Harris (1976:29) also highlight the main ideas taken over by progressivism from the Romantic movement - which has emerged in the eighteenth century in Germany, England and France and of which Rousseau is one of the exponents. As a fundamental challenge to the Enlightenment confidence in rationality, universalism, abstract analysis and urbanity, the Romantic movement emphasizes human 'inwardness', private subjective meanings and symbols, and complex personal motives. According to Skilbeck (1982:7) the Romantic movement contributed to the popularization of the view that, in education, "transmitting a cultural heritage must be made subservient to 'discovering' and 'following' the developing impulses of the individual child. He also points out that, under the influence of nineteenth-century socialism and the prevailing idealistic philosophy, Rousseau's original theory has come to be communal as well as individualistic. Hence, contemporary progressivism in education accepts that "man is not an isolated individual but fundamentally a social being, who not only has to learn to live in harmony with others but whose very development is conditioned by social relationships" (Skilbeck 1982:9).



To the framework provided by those authors, I shall add a more differentiated perspective on culture (cf. discussion in Chapter 2 above) in order to analyze Brazilian curricular documents for what they might be saying about culture in language teaching. Such perspective allows us, for example, to recognize the Enlightenment's view of culture in the 'cultural bias' of classical humanism - a view which surfaces again in reconstructionism, in the guise of the 'pursuit of perfectibility' and in stark contrast with the Romantic view of culture (as a general process of 'inner development') which, in turn, characterizes progressivism.

In my view, the Brazilian sociopolitical context in the past four decades has helped to create the ethos of romantic progressivism, if not in educational theory, most certainly in actual practice in schools such as *Ipanema*. Besides, it seems to me that EFL teaching has been practically impervious to reconstructionist concerns<sup>45</sup> which are embodied, for example, in Freire's (1970, 1973) notion of 'conscientization'<sup>46</sup> through education or in Byram's (1988, 1989, 1993, for example) proposals for culture-and-language teaching. Indeed, there are no indications in current EFL practice in Brazil that the cultural trivia embodied in glossy EFL textbooks is ready to give way to a 'reconstructionist' syllabus marked by an emphasis either on 'problem-posing' culture teaching and 'conscientization' or else by a concern with the promotion of international understanding through foreign language-and-culture teaching.

In what follows, an attempt will be made to consider the 'official voices' of

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<sup>45</sup>A rare example of reconstructionist concerns translated into an approach to curricular content in ESL education is Nina Wallerstein's (1983) book inspired by 'critical theory' and by Freire's (1970a, 1970b) 'conscientization' and 'problem-posing pedagogy'. To my knowledge, the sole representative of similar concerns in EFL education is Moita Lopes' work (1986, for example).

<sup>46</sup>"Conscientization refers to the process in which men, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects achieve a deepening awareness both of sociocultural reality that shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality" (cf. Freire 1985, Note 2, p. 93).



Brazilian curricular documents against the backdrop of each educational value system without losing sight, however, of the tension which holds together any productive system of categorization.

## 5.2 The 'official voices' of language policy makers

In a number of documents issued by Brazilian educational authorities in the last three decades, language is regarded as 'an instrument of communication and expression of a culture' - a view originally expressed in the 1971 law (no.5692) which defines the basic framework for education in Brazil, and which has since been given various interpretations by the local education authorities throughout the country. Besides determining (cf. Art.2) that the medium of instruction at the first two levels of schooling must be 'the national language' (i.e., Portuguese), the 5692/71 law states, in its Art.4, Par.2, that Portuguese - both as 'an instrument of communication and as expression of *the* Brazilian culture' [emphasis added] - should be given special relevance amongst those disciplines integrating the common core curriculum and which were then grouped under the general heading 'Communication and Expression'.

Two interconnected strands begin to emerge as to the way this particular educational context voices the question of language and culture in the curriculum. The first can be termed the '*language-as-communication*' strand for its emphasis on the role of language as the tool of communication 'par excellence'. The other can be referred to as the '*language-as-culture*' strand for its emphasis on the role of language as 'expression of a [national] culture'. The first strand is identifiably progressivist in its general claims, whereas the underlying beliefs in the language-as-culture strand are traceable to classical humanism. In both strands, however, there are recognizable

echoes of the Enlightenment view of culture, as will be demonstrated below.

Not unlike the Brazilian educational system in general, the 'Basic Law' of 1971 (henceforth Doc. 1), though imbued with progressivist and/or Romantic values still breathes one of the basic tenets of classical humanism, namely, that education should be concerned with "the maintenance and transmission (...) of the wisdom and culture of previous generations" (Clark 1987:6). As for what should qualify as transmissible accumulated knowledge in terms of the 1971 document, implied in the phrase 'the Brazilian culture' is a view of culture as a phenomenon homogeneous enough to be 'expressed' by an equally homogeneous 'national language' - or rather, by the 'myth of monoglossia' (Clark and Holquist 1984:289) which is the ideal of linguists, politicians, and policy makers alike.

It is significant that in a document<sup>47</sup> (Doc. 2) appended to the 1971 law, the underlined phrase above is reported as 'the Brazilian Culture', whereby the capitalization suggests an 'enlightened' view of culture as 'civilization', i.e as external development towards an ideal state of refinement and order (cf. 2.2.1.2 above). Moreover, in their concern with the preservation and transmission of the Brazilian culture is an expression of a classical humanist "orientation towards achieving or recapturing a standard which was built up at some time in the past [and which] constitutes both an ideal to be striven for and a heritage to be transmitted" (Skilbeck 1982:17).

Notwithstanding these classical humanist undertones, further on in this same document (Doc. 2) there are echoes of progressivism and its concern with "the development of the individual as a whole person" - a concern which in turn requires

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<sup>47</sup>*Resolution CFE 8/71*, Annexo to Law no. 5692/71. CFE (Federal Education Council), 1971.



school language teaching "to promote individual development, and enable pupils to create wider networks of personal relationships" (Clark 1987:92 and 95). Thus, for the writers of this second Brazilian document the teaching objectives of the disciplines grouped under the heading 'Communication and Expression' (e.g. Portuguese, Brazilian literature, modern foreign languages) should comprise more than the specific subject matter/content. As stated in the document, language teaching/learning should also aim at the 'cultivation' of the necessary linguistic means "for [the learner's] coherent contact with his fellows and (...) a harmonious development of his personality, in its physical, psychic and spiritual aspects". This dual emphasis on 'human inwardness' and on the importance of social experience for human development echoes one of the basic tenets of the Romantic movement which, according to Skilbeck (1982), underlies progressivism in education. However, though acknowledging both the intra- and the inter-personal dimensions of communication, the view of 'language as an instrument of communication and expression of a culture' in the document predates the notion of communication as a process of personal expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning, a notion which is also associated with progressivism.

In a subsequent document<sup>48</sup> (Doc. 3), also issued at federal level and related to the same 1971 law, L1 teaching objectives are made more explicit - and are indicative of the interconnection between the 'language-as-culture' and 'language-as-communication' strands. Thus, besides having an 'instrumental function' as the 'exclusive tool of communication' in the dual sense of 'transmission and comprehension of ideas, facts and feelings and in its oral and written modes...', the

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<sup>48</sup>*Opinion no.853/71*. CFE (Federal Education Council), 1971.

teaching of Portuguese (as the expression of the Brazilian Culture) should 'lead to the comprehension and appreciation of our History, our Literature, the Civilization we have been construing and of our most typical values'. In line with classical humanism and at odds with the otherwise progressivist orientation of the document, their view of culture as a country's "History, Literature, and Civilization" - all capitalized - is coupled to a view of "one language as expression of one culture" whereby this monolithic language-culture Whorfian entity is given clearly defined nation-state contours; after all, the official voices in the document bear in mind that "there's always a country behind a language". Perhaps in an attempt to soften the ethnocentric slant, they appeal to the 'universalism' of an European cultural heritage:

*This view should not, however, lead us to narrow exclusiveness. Inasmuch as our history is part of universal history, Brazilian literature could not be studied in abstraction of its Portuguese roots and without being inserted into the European cultural complex from which it originates. Moreover, one should not forget that 'there's always a country behind a language' (...) (Doc. 3, p. 130)*

Not surprisingly, this 'single-voiced' conception of culture-language-nation invests language teaching with the missionary role of encouraging positive identification with national identity/culture/values; that is, as 'expression of *the* Brazilian Culture' (my emphasis), the teaching of Portuguese is assigned the tautological role of enhancing the comprehension and appreciation of what eventually amounts to 'the Brazilian Culture'. Nor is it surprising that if transferred to foreign language teaching without any critical elaboration such views should often be rendered in single-voiced discourses tainted by national chauvinism, xenophobia, or else, colonized subservience - in my view, perverse manifestations of the same monologic perspective.

Another manifestation of the language-as-culture strand can be identified, for



example, in a 1986 document<sup>49</sup> (Doc. 4) issued by the ‘National Committee for the Development of the Teaching/Learning of the Mother Tongue’, as they put forward the notion of ‘languages of culture’:

*All languages are ‘cultural’ in the sense that all languages, without exception, originate from within a culture and are tools of communication and expression within that culture. A distinction should be drawn, however, between languages whose societies and cultures are not much differentiated as regards manual and mental [labour], [languages] with low tradition and little accumulation of knowledge; and languages whose societies and cultures are mosaics of high structural complexity caused by strong class differences and great division of labour, [languages] with uninterrupted written tradition and almost unlimited lexical resources. (Doc. 4, p. 5)*

It is also argued in this document that all school subjects - and foreign languages in particular - have an instrumental role to play in the development of the learners’ linguistic performance in the ‘national language’, here identified as Portuguese ‘in its Brazilian variety’. Besides, the Committee stress the role of foreign languages - or of those languages presumably qualifying as ‘languages of culture’ - in that respect and insist that there should be a strict collaboration between L1 and FL teachers:

*The area in which the teacher’s joint action is likely to achieve the best results is that of foreign language teaching - with the exception of its initial stages which may preclude the use of the learner’s national language as an intermediary tool. (...) The task is not difficult and a contrast between the two languages will result in better knowledge of both of them (...) (Doc. 4, p. 23)*

The *language-as-communication* strand and the *language-as-culture* one identified in the documents above - all primarily concerned with the role of L1 teaching - take on a particular configuration in documents issued in the seventies and

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<sup>49</sup>“Directives for the Improvement of Teaching/Learning of the Portuguese Language”. National Committee Final Report, MEC (Ministry of Education and Culture), 1986.



eighties, which deal with the offer of foreign languages in the curriculum. It will become clear in the analysis that, though concerned with the eventual role the diversity of national languages and cultures may play in general language education, these documents do not in any way see foreign language teaching as a means to promote 'a sense of world citizenship' which, in Skilbeck's (1986:5) words, is "the next step beyond identification with the nation state". Instead, the underlying view of culture in most of them has clearly-defined 'national' contours.

In fact, a considerable number of these documents were attempts to interpret a particularly ambiguous phrase in the 1971 law, which stated that 'a foreign language' should be part of the core of disciplines common to all schools. For most State Councils of Education, the indefinite 'a' was interpreted as a numeral ('one') and English soon became the only foreign language on offer in most schools, thus legitimizing an already prevailing trend. In the ensuing debate stirred up by what was referred to as "the impoverishing predominance" of English in a 1975 document<sup>50</sup> (Doc. 5, p. 29), most valued was the so-called "*de-parochializing role [of foreign languages] in a world which becomes more international as it shrinks under the impact of technology and the means of communication*" (Doc. 5, p. 28).

Redefined in terms of the new technological-communicative needs, the instrumental function of foreign languages was at times equated with the mastering of the 'four abilities', or with an ability to communicate effectively with speakers of languages of international currency. At other times a language's instrumental value was equated with its role as a 'carrier' and 'transmitter' of a culture (cf. Doc. 6<sup>51</sup>, p.

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<sup>50</sup>*Opinion no. 478/75*. CFE (Federal Education Council), 1975.

<sup>51</sup>*Indication no. 54/75*. CFE (Federal Education Council), 1975.



27). In various documents which then made a case for French against the predominance of English in the school curriculum, it is possible to recognize faint echoes of the reconstructionist belief that the educational aims of foreign language teaching should include "the social, moral and intellectual development of the pupil through the recognition of differences and similarities between countries and cultures" (Skilbeck 1986, p.27). However, as prestigious voices of classical humanism argue for the reinstatement of French<sup>52</sup> in the curriculum of Brazilian schools, their concern with "the educational and cultural impact of foreign languages" (Doc. 5, p. 28) is at odds with monologic views of language and culture which are more likely to hinder rather than foster the achievement of any cultural or educational objectives.

Not unlike 'authoritative discourse' (cf. Bakhtin 1981:343) which is 'fused with authority', in this type of educational discourse a language is 'indissolubly fused with' its cultural prestige, and 'it stands and falls together with' that prestige, as illustrated in the extracts below:

*We believe that French can still play a relevant role in the cultural formation of our youngsters. (...) [It is] a valuable instrument for the teaching of culture, whether as a discipline of expression and thought, or for the spiritual values it transmits. (...) When it comes to expressing thought, French accords us with the discipline of the essential. (...) For all these reasons, added to the weight of cultural tradition, we should prevent French language teaching from (...) extinction in our schools.*  
(Doc. 6, pp. 27-8)

Other official voices, also firmly placed within the language-as-culture strand, have argued their case for French in the state of Rio de Janeiro:

*In Rio de Janeiro, unlike what may happen in other states, the alternative [to English] should be French. Either because it is a*

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<sup>52</sup>Until the advent of the first federal *Law of Directives and Bases for Education*, dated 21/12/1961, French, English, Spanish, and Latin had the status of compulsory subjects in the curriculum of all Brazilian schools.



*language whose study can contribute to the full command of the 'vernacular' language [i.e. Portuguese], or else because French is the basic expression of the culture of a people whose thought has helped to forge Brazilian civilization. French is the language which matters most to Rio de Janeiro, for our history has been influenced by the French and the French culture since early days. (Doc. 7<sup>53</sup>, p. 3)*

As they make their case for French, these 'official voices' go on to measure individual languages (i.e. English and Spanish<sup>54</sup>) against their prestige as 'cultural assets', and against their instrumental value as a medium of international communication, or else, as a personal 'working tool'. In the comparison, 'work' pales against cultural heritage; so does 'culture' with Latin-American geographical contours:

*In fact, for many peoples in the last half of the century English has been a working tool and not a cultural asset in the strict sense of the term, [a sense] which applies to France herself. Brazilian tradition is European and our cultural vocation brings us close to France. It was through French authors and French translators that Germany, Italy, England and the world in general were brought to us. Whereas geography has surrounded us with Spanish-speaking countries, the history of Brazilian thought and culture would render a Latin America-centred position [on this issue] virtually unrealistic. (Doc. 7, p. 3)*

Other voices arguing against the 'monopoly' of English in Rio de Janeiro school curricula announce a growing tension between progressivist and reconstructionist values which will surface in the EFL lessons observed in this study. This tension between a progressivist concern with human diversity, and a reconstructionist concern with the social and/or communicative nature of language use (cf. Clark 1987:100-1; Kelly 1969:263) is partly reconciled in the document below,

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<sup>53</sup>*Opinion no 232/82. CEE/RJ (State Education Council/ Rio de Janeiro), 1982.*

<sup>54</sup>In 1984 Spanish was officially included in the curriculum of schools in the state of Rio de Janeiro, and should be offered as an alternative to English/French (cf. DO 22/05/84, p.13). However, the actual implementation of such 'Spanish-for-all' policy has suffered from lack of resources, e.g. trained teachers - not to mention attitudinal/emotional factors, as implied in the quotation above. This situation is likely to be reversed soon as a result of the newly-created MERCOSUL (the South-American version of the EC), which has raised the 'market value' of Spanish as a language of trade/commerce.



as voices of the local educational culture state their belief in the function of foreign language knowledge: to enable "an opening to the other, so as to better apprehend one's own identity" (Doc.8<sup>55</sup>, p.6). This is how they state their case, in a near-Bakhtinian tone:

*In the case of individuals as well as cultures, the OTHER is the other of one's SELF: a fundamental unity makes one the mirror in which the other recognizes himself/itself, just as much in his/its similarities as in his/its differences. In so far as one needs to safeguard his own culture by cultivating his own language, then he should additionally learn another/other language[s] - privileged vehicles of other cultures, with which one shall then be able to dialogize. It is within, and by means of, this dynamic tension that the active consciousness of one's own identity should emerge, thus enabling the choice of ways/routes to true independence."* [emphasis in the original] (Doc. 8, p.4)

As these voices go on to argue for a wider range of choice of FLs in the curriculum, it is also possible to hear echoes of classical humanism behind their language-as-culture equation:

*For the moment, owing to political and economic reasons, English monopolizes this process of international communication, blocking the route once open by French. We argue for a 'de jure' and 'de facto' linguistic plurality as a means of escaping this sterilizing and alienating cultural monolithism; [and we also argue] for an opening to the other which should stimulate critical reflection about our-own-ness: a dialectic [tension] between the values of a human universalism and the particular richness of each individual culture. (Doc. 8, p. 4)*

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<sup>55</sup>*Opinion no.86/83. CEE/RJ (State Council of Education/ Rio de Janeiro), 1983.*

### 5.3 *Ipanema School* voices

In the document containing the rationale and statement of objectives for foreign language teaching (English and French) at *Ipanema School* echoes of progressivism are most often mixed with a faint reconstructionist tone. The opening paragraph announces the overall 'communicative' emphasis of the document: "*Every living language is an instrument of written and oral communication and the central aim of (foreign) language teaching is thus to equip the pupil with the means to communicate through language*".

As for the means to achieve these communicative goals, *Ipanema* school favours an "eclectic methodology ... whereby the study of forms is linked to communicative needs". Teaching objectives are thus defined in terms of individual communicative needs whereas syllabus content is outlined in terms of the Council of Europe (van Ek 1975, 1977; Wilkins 1976) inventory of notions, functions, and their linguistic correlates (see *Appendix C*). Recognizable echoes of the reconstructionist ends-means curriculum (Taba 1962) - as embodied in the functional-notional approach (cf. Clark 1987:29) - are here reconciled with progressivist concerns with individual growth through experiential learning of the foreign language. It is true, however, that 'experience' is here conceived in a particular way:

*The emphasis is thus on learning how to use the foreign language in a real manner. Three themes will be developed throughout the course of study [so as to enable the learner]:*

- *to position himself as an individual*
- *[to] interact with groups*
- *[and] ... with the environment*

*The context as presented in textbooks will be organized around fictional and real-life situations which should enable the pupil to experience these three themes in a gradual and lively way.*

In line with the overall progressivist ethos of the document is an underlying



belief in some of the principles of the 'communicative approach' as identified by Mitchell (1988:2-3). There is, for example, an emphasis on the use of cooperative learning activities such as games, simulations and role play to encourage natural communication or 'spontaneous interaction', along with some commitment to the individualization of the syllabus. At *Ipanema*, progressivist concerns with individual growth are somewhat at odds with the attempt to smooth differences resulting from the pupils' diverse extramural language learning experience (e.g. foreign travel, private language courses) through a 'levelling' system which is emblematic of the unstated two-tier system which characterizes foreign language education in the country.

A further expression of their avowed 'eclecticism' - perhaps more accurately qualified as 'haphazard' (cf. Widdowson 1990:50) - is the implied compromise between a commitment to the ethos of pupil-centred inductive learning ('the pupil must always arrive at conclusions inductively') and a recognition of the need for 'a reflexive study' of the grammatical system - though the latter is restricted to the more advanced stages of language learning development.

As for 'culture' in the *Ipanema* document, it is taken broadly as 'real [way of] life' and 'civilization', echoing the distinction between culture with a small 'c' and culture with a big 'C', incorporated in the writings of language teachers theorists in the fifties and sixties (cf. 2.2.1.2 above). For those theorists (for example, Brooks 1960/1964, Lado 1957 and 1964, Nostrand 1966, Rivers 1968, Seelye 1968) the teaching of the way-of-life culture allowed more easily for cross-cultural comparisons and should thus be able to contribute to international understanding, which is also a main reconstructionist view. In the *Ipanema* document, however, culture/Culture has nothing but a supporting role as a motivating factor in the learning process - again in

line with the progressivist view that education is a way of enabling individual 'growth' through experience. Hence, the *Ipanema* document recommends that foreign language teaching should take place in 'a friendly environment' and that an attempt should be made "to reproduce situations of the real life ... of the foreign countries where the language is spoken". For the sake of 'realism', or rather, to ensure the 'authenticity' of language in the classroom, the document also recommends "the use of films, recordings, drawings, photographs and realia, as well as the use of the foreign language during most of the lesson time".

Not unlike what seems to be true of much 'communicative' practice, the concern with reality and with real language use is translated into a commitment to using the target language as the main medium of classroom communication. Besides, the emphasis is on 'the spoken language, on dialogue, natural communication' -a formulation which suggests an equation of the oral, interactive aspects of communication with 'real' language use. Hinted in this document - but stated at length in the interview material analyses below - is the widespread and mistaken belief in the 'naturalness' and pedagogic primacy of oral interactive competence in foreign language learning. By describing syllabus content in terms of the Council of Europe inventory while aiming at 'natural communication', the *Ipanema* document reflects another widespread and mistaken belief which also underlies certain 'communicative' claims to 'authenticity'. As Widdowson (1983:30) points out, implied in claims to authenticity is the assumption that "if language is to be taught *for* communication it has necessarily to be presented *as* communication". Since I view the question of 'authenticity' as inherently linked to the question of the specific authority of the EFL textbook (or, more precisely, of its *lack* of authority in particular classroom contexts),



the two questions will be taken up in more detail below.

At this point, it is necessary to sum up the main beliefs about language teaching expressed in the *Ipanema* document and which are expected to surface again in the interview and the observational material. In fact, such beliefs closely resemble the set of general assumptions prevailing in the EFL profession in the early eighties, as compiled by Raimes (1983) from various sources in the literature. These include a view of language as ‘communication’, an emphasis on ‘real’ language use, and a concern with the learner, the learning process and the learning environment - all of them concerns of progressivism in education apparently embraced by *Ipanema* teachers. According to Clark (1987:51-80), such progressivist concerns are also embodied in ‘process approaches’ to foreign language education<sup>56</sup>, e.g. Prahbu’s (1980) ‘procedural syllabus’<sup>57</sup>, and Krashen and Terrell’s (1983) ‘natural approach’. Echoes of the latter resonate in the classes observed, as we shall see below.

It is also possible to identify in the *Ipanema* document signs of what I shall call the ‘real communication fallacy’, i.e. the failure to recognize the lack of fit between the nature of communication in actual situations of language use in the world ‘out there’ and the nature of communication within classroom boundaries. Stemming from the inability to make pedagogic provision for the lack of fit between the two ‘realities’ is the tendency for EFL classroom practice of the type announced in the *Ipanema* document to trivialize content and/or reduce it to a series of oral

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<sup>56</sup>In my view, Clark (1987:51-80) wrongly subsumes under ‘process approaches’ conceptualizations as fundamentally distinct - not to say antipodal - as for example Widdowson’s (1978) proposals for the foreign language to be the medium of instruction for one or more subjects in the curriculum, and the ones put forward by Krashen 1982, and Krashen and Terrell 1983. (Cf. Widdowson 1990:chapter 2, for example, for a critique of Krashen’s so-called ‘fundamental pedagogic principle’ and the ‘Monitor Theory’).

<sup>57</sup>Cf. also Prahbu, N.S. 1987. *Second Language Pedagogy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

‘communicative activities’ which, though interpersonal, lack any ‘real’ context, or content, for that matter. Before looking at *Ipanema* classrooms for evidence of such tendency, however, it is necessary to attend to what teachers have to say about culture, language, and the content of their EFL lessons.



## Chapter 6

### Analysis of Interview Material

#### 6.1 Teachers' voices

The following account results from the analysis of transcripts of the interview material (cf. 4.5.1 above). In fact, since the interviews were all conducted in Portuguese, this account is based on my translation of the Portuguese version of the transcript. To the multiplicity of voices identified in this section should thus be added those of this writer as researcher, interviewer, transcriber, translator, and/or interpreter.

These interviews were primarily designed to elicit teachers' perspectives on the EFL syllabus content at *Ipanema* so as to incorporate their voices to the study. In order to make sense of what teachers were saying, however, it was also necessary to identify them as members of the EFL culture in the country. To that end, the teachers were also asked to talk about their experience as English language learners/users as well as about their academic and professional background. I shall begin the discussion of the interview material with an overview of this 'background' information which has also helped me in the decision about which classes to select for the observation, as will be explained below.

##### 6.1.1 The quest for 'real' language proficiency

Not unlike most EFL secondary school teachers in the country, and in compliance with the current legislation, the EFL teachers at *Ipanema* hold a first degree in English language teaching, which is usually also a degree in Portuguese and the corresponding 'literatures' (i.e. Brazilian, Portuguese, American and English literature). In Brazilian

terms, this is a qualification achieved after a four-year university course of study, most of it devoted to a 'literature-oriented' curriculum designed under the inspiration of classical humanism. Besides, there is usually very little or no concern with teacher training in those courses, let alone with 'education' (cf. Widdowson's distinction between training and education: 1983, 1978). For this and other reasons that will become clearer below, it is not unusual for the Brazilian EFL learner and/or prospective teacher - i.e. those who can afford it - to look for more 'proficiency-oriented' courses in private language institutes, and/or hold (teaching) certificates issued by any of the various bi-national centres in the country. At *Ipanema*, four of the five English teachers have been through the usual English language course experience, or even, as one of them has emphatically stated: "I did basically every [English] course in town". Unlike the average Brazilian school teacher, however, three of them are also holders of post-graduate certificates/degrees (Diploma in Applied Linguistics/ELT, M.A. in Education, M.A. in Educational Psychology - all of them Brazilian degrees). Besides, two out of the five have had the highly-valued 'lived' language experience in an English-speaking country.

The teacher (Teacher E, or 'Elizabeth') whose classes were eventually selected for the observation had all the qualifications above - both academic and 'experiential'. That is, besides holding a degree in English/Portuguese and an M.A. in Educational Psychology, she had also lived abroad on two occasions: two years in England at an early age and a year in the U.S. as a young housewife. Her teaching experience included several years at a prestigious local university, where she taught English to undergraduates. Perhaps as a consequence of her training and experience - which also included a certain familiarity with ethnographic research procedures - she showed no



signs of being particularly affected by the researcher's presence from the outset of the research process. Other factors motivating the selection of her classes for the observation, however, bear more directly on the question of 'reflexivity' in this study. The first has to do with Elizabeth's position as one of the two full-time English teachers who was also a 'permanent' member of the staff (the others being either part-timers or holding 'temporary' contracts), and that diminished the risks of having the study disrupted by sudden changes (e.g. two of the 'temporary' teachers left the school during the semester, and without giving advance notice, in order to secure a better, more stable position elsewhere). The second has to do with the fact that, unlike the other two teachers whose classes had originally been considered for the long-term observation, Elizabeth was not a former pupil of mine, nor of the university where I worked as a full-time teacher and researcher - and that again may help to explain the high level of 'ethnographic rapport' in this research.

### 6.1.2 The concern with 'reality'

A salient feature in the teachers' interview material and a recurring topic throughout the data is here termed the 'concern with reality'; it has to do with the value attached to experiential learning of a foreign language, and in particular, to the direct experience provided by a stay abroad. In fact, a stay in an English-speaking country is often perceived as the closest a non-native learner/teacher can get to real-life language experience, or to the ideal state of 'near-nativeness':

That is, my English [as a language] model [for the pupils] is not the most perfect one either, for being there is one thing, living there is another and you...; being a native is one thing, living there is another, being here is quite another thing, which is my case (...)  
*But what do you think your expectations are? To teach... which English, to whom?*  
 I think in the beginning, when I started some twelve years ago, [my target 'model'] was like the perfect thing, the closest\  
*Which is?*

...the closest possible to what is out there...

*To the American model=*

=To the American model. Nowadays I understand that is virtually impossible. Then I try and do my best, so to speak, (do) as well as I can. [T.C, 9:30-53]

Two of the teachers see a stay abroad as the necessary condition for the acquisition of the much sought-after native-like oral fluency. They seem to experience a sense of inadequacy for being cast in the role of surrogate native-speaker interlocutors in the classroom without having ‘lived the language in loco’<sup>58</sup>:

[You] try your best to get the class involved, to get them... er... motivated so that they can talk as if they were using their first language; that’s what I’d like to have, fluency, like you get when you live in a country for three years... [T.D, 11:18-22]

I try to use American English (...) [But] for those of us who do not live the language, so to speak, we who do not live the language in loco, then, what is one’s **accent**, right? Then I try to get closer to the English of - where from? Well, I don’t know, really, from here, you know, there is no way out. [T.A, 12:14-28]

Regardless of her three years of stay in English-speaking countries, Teacher E also seems to regard lack of ‘nativeness’ as a hindrance to ‘perfection’ in the ELT profession:

I like English very much, very much indeed, but I think the fact that I’m not ‘native’ - and that’s something that worries me a lot, not being ‘native’ and yet teaching English... *And why?*

Because, because despite several years of...of...therapy, I’m a perfectionist and so, well, I’m just done for! [laughs] [T.E,10:43-51]

For Teacher A, the second best for FL learners to ‘living the language in loco’ seems to be the private language course experience:

[The] group placed in Level 1 is the group who have not had the same opportunities as the boys placed in Level 2, [opportunities] to...er... live the language...the English language...

*Like what...?*

Like travelling, like private [language] courses... [T.A, 4:18-21]

### ‘Real-life’ content

Stemming from this faith in direct language experience abroad as a necessary

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<sup>58</sup>The reference in square brackets indicates the researcher’s folder/file from which the extracts were taken. That is, T.C, 9:30-53 means Teacher C\Cristina’s interview data, page 9, lines 30-53. For these and other conventions, see also 4.5.2 above.



condition for oral proficiency and professional expertise is a view of cultural content as emerging from 'real' language use:

If this pupil tells me one word or other in Portuguese - no problem - for he'll be fixing the structure [**I think he/she is...**] but at the same time it is linked to a certain content, you know, of real life - how can I put it?... It's the cultural aspect proper, it's presence, that is important for us. [T.A, 14:54-6, ff.15:1-3]

'Real-life' content thus conceived is believed to have a facilitating role in the learning process:

Then this question of...this thing of... er...perception...of real life together with... language, if they put these two things together, then it's much easier for them to learn... [T.A, 15:22-25]

To make up for the lack of 'real', i.e. 'native', interlocutors in the classroom there is always recourse to someone who has 'lived there':

We have this former pupil who's coming to have a chat with my pupils of class 5 and 6 because he's lived in Los Angeles. He was a pupil here and he took the material home to have a look, to read and all, and he's coming for a chat with the boys, at their level, about Los Angeles, because he lived there. He went there, he studied there and all, know what I mean? (T.A, 13:40-46)

As I hope to be able to demonstrate, the concern with reality is a recurrent theme in the teachers' interviews and it seems to be at the core of the question of cultural content. But first it is necessary to consider what teachers had to say about this question.

On the whole, teachers view cultural content as information about 'real' places of interest abroad, 'curiosities' and 'peculiarities' which might interest pupils, or else as a type of 'general knowledge' about the world 'out there' which the teacher herself is supposed to have:

[When I work with Blueprint<sup>59</sup>], well, then I have to understand a little about the whole world. [laughs]

Why?

Because it presents... The lessons are very real... For example, er..., I have to know, for example, the exact location of the Taj Mahal. I'll have to talk to them about that next

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<sup>59</sup>Abbs, B. and Freebairn, I. *Blueprint Two*. Harlow, Essex: Longman.

class. They will do their own research work, they'll find out, but I am also supposed to know it. [T.A., 13:49-55; 14:1-5]

The Teacher's Book is seen as a major resource to compensate for the teacher's lack of familiarity with such 'cultural information':

[In the textbook], everything takes place in York. The Teacher's Book itself has the guidelines for us, for example, about that particular street and that other...[The Shambles??] For instance, the first lesson was about a street, er... where..., in the medieval times, there were butchers there, you see, 'os açougues'. So, "Why are the houses so close to each other?" -"Because the sun...". So...

*And that sort of thing is, say, less familiar to you than Los Angeles - and perhaps to the pupils, as well.*

Absolutely! And to the pupils as well. [T.A 14:7-22]

The role of the textbook as a source of content will be discussed in more detail below. It is now necessary to consider the interview material for evidence of the way teachers view the question of culture in their lessons.

### 6.1.3 Culture and syllabus content

In their interviews teachers were asked to comment on the widespread belief that culture and language are so closely bound together that you cannot teach or learn one without the other. Their responses are significant in that they reveal different understandings of 'culture', 'teaching', and the nature of foreign language syllabus content.

In her response, Teacher F hints at the pedagogical nature of the relationship between language and culture in the foreign language classroom. As she points to the central role textbooks play in conveying cultural [and other] information, she suggests that EFL textbooks tend to keep the focus on grammar and drop the odd information about what she calls 'general culture' somewhere in the background:

*There is a general belief that language and culture are taught together - do you believe that is true?*

I think it should be true but I think that, in general terms, it's like I say, all textbooks seem all too much intent on giving\ (...) what you see is the presentation of a grammar



point; you ask pupils to talk about the texts in the coursebook that do not necessarily present\ they do present culture but not necessarily American or British culture. That is, they [the pupils] have an idea about what the other peoples do, about what happens in the world and things like that, but not necessarily [any information about] American culture, English culture or [culture] of English-speaking countries; but general culture, so to speak. [T.F, 3:31]

When attempting to clarify what she means by ‘culture’ she also outlines her ideal selection of cultural subject-matter:

*What do you mean by culture?*

Well, everything that is produced...by a people. Then, in those terms, culture does come up there [in the classroom/syllabus] - [culture] of several peoples, not necessarily of English-speaking ones...

*Everything that is produced by a people...*

Yes, in terms of art, in terms of literature, (...) music, everything that may be a form of artistic creation, you know? [T.F, 3:33-48]

I think there should be some history, some literature, a little of all those things - know what I mean? Not just... stuff for tourists... But, that’s not what happens, not really. (...) The texts would be of general interest, and not necessarily present either American culture or English culture. [T.F,2:29-42, 47-9]

She is critical of ‘the stuff for tourists’ that often passes for ‘culture’ in some EFL classrooms at *Ipanema*:

In Year 6 and 7, we usually give them a ... basis, you see, about the United States, England..., an idea about tourist places, culture. [T.F,1:6-8]

I think that, in terms of culture, what we often see - at least in the classroom - is exactly that sort of thing: places, ‘Oh, have you ever been to Miami?’, ‘Well, have you ever been no matter where else’... , tourist spots... In terms of culture, it’s all stuff for tourists. That’s the usual thing... [T.F, 219-24]

The assumption that culture and language are necessarily learnt/taught together is not shared by Teacher C, either:

*There’s a belief that when we learn a language - no matter which - we necessarily learn culture. Do you agree?*

Language...\ Learn culture?

*As you learn a language you’re learning the culture of that language; it’s almost as if culture were something inherent in language. What do you make of that?*

To a certain extent, isn’t it? I believe it’s...half and half, isn’t it? For you may learn a language very well - the grammar - but not learn, let’s say,...the functioning of the whole thing. (...) I think it’s possible to learn one thing...without the other. [T.C 12:40-56]

In this teacher’s view, culture learning may take place in a cultural-island type of classroom - one that requires the presence of native [preferably American] teachers



to create a ‘true-to-life’ atmosphere. As an example, she refers to her own experience as a young language learner in two private courses - one ‘American’, the other ‘English’:

I did learn [culture] because all the teachers were American then in a way I knew that I was\ They passed lots of information and there was a lot of..., say, if it was **Halloween** time, it was... - whatever - then there was this party with all those props ... whatever. They tried to create a certain atmosphere..., you know? [T.C,13:47-52]

[At CULTURA, the ‘English’ course] there wasn’t anything like the sort of information given at [the American course] that was something much more... true to life. At CULTURA, you could come across something here and there but it wasn’t anything that was taught...overtly. [T.C,14:12-4]

In tune with her belief that ‘true-to-life’ culture teaching should bear the imprint of ‘nativeness’ is her view of culture as something that is ‘theirs, not ours’. Not surprisingly, she feels ill at ease in her attempts to ‘pass’ cultural information, regardless of her experience abroad:

*Do you think there is anything - that when you teach English you’re also teaching culture somehow?*

Yes, I mean, I try to pass what I know, I try to pass as much as I can to them; that is, I’m not sure whether or not they get it but I think that within the limits of what I know, what I studied, I always try and give them some supplementary information or something like that...

*As for example? Could you give me an example of what that supplementary information would be, that is, what is culture to you?*

(...) I mean, it seems to me...it’s something that is theirs, not ours. It’s like an item, so to speak, a little piece of the whole lot... [T.C,6:21-34; 7:4-6]

And still:

I think it is information about them, isn’t it?

*Them?*

Them, Americans, isn’t it?

*Oh, about...?*

About their way of life, how the country works, that sort of thing [T.C 7:22-32]

Elsewhere in her interview Teacher C identifies the cultural content of her lessons as information - again imparted mostly by the textbook - about places, professions, ‘things they do over there’ (i.e. in the U.S.):

There’s this lesson I’ll be giving soon that is about women’s work, that kind of thing and, let’s say, they focus on American women..., the number of women who work, how normal it is for women to work outside, that kind of thing... Some of the lessons have more, and others, less of that. The story line/ some of [the lessons] put a lot of stress on, say, things they do over there; others do not.



(...) I mean, there's something about [American] culture [in the textbook], names of cities..., that sort of thing. [T.C, 4:17-36].

A different view of the culture-language (pedagogical) relationship is expressed by Teacher D:

*When you say that...that you're transmitting something to them in educational and/or cultural terms you don't mean... that it should be any specific information about a foreign culture, do you?*

[She pauses for a while] Well, I find that important as well. Once I'm teaching the English language, it's important to know that so as to be able to transmit it, to broaden the pupils' scope about that country. Whether you want it or not, you're bound to transmit it quite naturally in the texts. [T.D, 16:8-19]

In response to what she meant by 'texts', she replied:

Text? Well, the text can be a poem, the text can be a..., a leaflet, the text can be a discussion, the text can be a dialogue - anything that would provoke some kind of change in their minds; that is, what it [the text] has done to me I want to pass to them.

*And what about the content of such texts?*

Oh! The content of such texts, for it to be able to cause any changes\ in terms of education, I think the content of such texts should be a certain type of content within, say, within certain... parameters. [T.D, 12:1-14]

Not unlike other teachers above, Teacher D believes there is no substitute for the direct, 'lived' experience abroad when it comes to acquiring cultural knowledge - in her terms, 'particularities' about a particular country:

In fact, in each country, when you live in that country you can then detect these [cultural] particularities, isn't it? Like I said, I'd love to have that experience (...) travel all over (...) because that's really something you only... you only notice when you're told by someone (...) or when you live in the [foreign] country, isn't it? [T.D,18:43-9]

When asked for examples of cultural information in her lessons, she came up with a fairly 'varied' list of items:

The texts, see, the texts are my own selection. For example, there's one about **lasers** - I tried to give them something as varied as possible - then, then first one was about the history of the English language, there was one about **soap operas**..., another about... that poem by **Frost**, '**The Road Not Taken**' (...) Then there's this thing about **Coca-Cola**... So, they're as varied as they can possibly be... [T.D, 9:53-6; 10:1-8]

Although some of her 'texts' conveying cultural content seem to be selected for their educational value, she concedes that, for the sake of motivation, there should be room in the syllabus for texts on youth culture:



*Is Coca-Cola culture?*

It is. To them, to a certain extent.

*Who's 'them'?*

To them, the pupils! **Jeans**, Coca-Cola - culture is all that! To me, it involves **jeans**, their way of dressing, their language...

*'Their' ...?*

The pupils', theirs, the pupils'. [T.D, 12:22-34]

There seems to be a proviso though:

I think all's motivating, anything that's got\ For instance, (...) a text, er, Madonna - she's someone who does not interest me very much as a person but that wouldn't stop me\ For example, take that latest movie of hers; that movie is totally degenerate, I wouldn't bring that into a classroom, you know what I mean? Now, the character, Madonna as a character, er, as an artist... [T.D, 12:46-51]

Teacher A also seems to find a certain pedagogic role for her pupils' familiarity with the ELT version of American (youth) culture:

If I ask them where Los Angeles is, for example, they answer straight away. If I ask where is **York** - I had to show them in the map where it is, what it is like and all, you know what I mean? (...) Then this is true of music, of [movie] stars, of...of...

*You mean, er, they are more familiar with American [pop] music, American [pop] stars...*

They are. Much more. It all becomes easier then. (T.A, 16:21-35)

In a more elaborate vein, Teacher E tries to justify the use made of such 'cultural content' in ELT textbooks:

[The textbook writers] tend to stress the similarities, what is familiar, what is known already, and they start from that so as to encourage communication, instant identification. (...) We feel they are trying to appeal to what Brazilians and Americans might have in common so that they can\ for there's a point in starting from something familiar instead of starting with what is not known - that would make things easier for you... [T.E, 16:38-48]

Teacher F, however, is very critical of young Brazilians' identification with 'things American' - a situation which seems to render the superficial textbook information about American youth culture redundant, not least because that is also the sort of information pupils can certainly get in private English courses:

In a dominated country there's no other way, [the pupils] are rather familiar even with the day-to-day life [in the US]. (...) They know songs with English words, all they like are American groups, they'd only wear American jeans, all is American - this is a dominated country whether we like it or not; for them this is all fairly normal (...), they are the ones who come up with examples of those things in class. They are more familiar, perhaps, with the American culture than with ours, and that's one of the reasons why they choose [to do] English, so that they can understand the words in those American songs. And that's why they do English [at private language] courses. [T.F, 1:24-42]



#### 6.1.4 Teacher E/Elizabeth's voice

It is now necessary to look more closely at what Teacher E said about the question of culture in the content of her lessons since they were the focus of the long-term observation. The prominence here given to Elizabeth's voice justly reflects her status as the most 'vocal' participant of the multivoiced discourse under examination.

When Elizabeth was asked whether she believed she taught culture in her English language lessons, there was a ring of unease in her reply - a reaction to what she mistook for a suggestion that she might be 'transmitting foreign culture':

[When I teach English] I'm not passing foreign culture. No, I am but I think I'm not!  
[laughs]

*Why?*

Because I'm not interested in transmitting the American culture, as it is; I'm interested in passing, perhaps, the use of this or that...structure, er, what I say in this or that situation, as someone who needs to be in contact with English [British] people or with Americans; but I will not be either British or American. Anything will have to go through my...personal filter and it will be a Brazilian filter.

*Uh-huh.*

So, I'm not interested in spreading...at their level... No, I'm not. [Not] in their class, the 7A. Maybe in the Second Grade [Senior Secondary], in year 11, I may... There's a better atmosphere in the classroom that allows for an exchange of ideas.

*Which ideas?*

Cultural ideas like 'they do this way and we do that way', in comparison, 'Oh, I wonder why they act the way they do'. Yes, that sort of thing... [T.E, 7:40-52]

In her second interview, she reinforces her reservations about culture teaching:

*[In the other interview] when you said you were not 'a transmitter of any foreign culture' - does the problem lie with [the word] 'transmit'?*

Yes, sure.

*Or maybe because you were not sure whether or not there was any 'culture' [content] in the classroom\*

No, I was sure there was some [cultural content in the EFL classes]- [I was not sure] of the amount, the degree - but my question had to do with [the word] 'transmit', that is, whether I'd become a formal vehicle for...

*I know, a herald ...*

Yes, a herald...

*...for the 'alien' culture [laughs].* [T.E, 18:6-24]

Her personal experience as a young learner is partly responsible for her reservations:



(...) When I did English, there was this model, this thing about perfection, er, about the English [sense of] order, endurance, I mean, I had to put up with all that and [then] I realized I'll never be like that, it's not myself, I won't follow that model...

*Oh, you mean the teacher as... a\ setting up an unattainable model\*

Unattainable, exactly. And then on to try and sell those models; no way! (...) The English pattern, the American pattern - like Americans are hard-working, bla, bla, bla... Healthy, more intelligent, richer; I mean, all that left a strong mark on me. I find it all terribly wrong. [T.E 18:45-54]

### Culture is 'an elitist matter'

Another reason behind her reservations about being cast in the role of 'transmitter of a foreign culture' is her view culture as an 'elitist matter', difficult to be 'translated' into suitable subject-matter for a class of young learners:

Now, I'd have great difficulty in...er...making a...in being a translator of the foreign culture in class, in year 7.

*Any culture? Any foreign culture?*

No, I find it easier with more mature people but with children I have a lot of difficulty. (...) If I was the one to propose the activity, if the activities were my own, they would never involve anything 'cultural' (...) Culture for me is an elitist matter, isn't it? Culture, as I see it - and that's what it really means for me - is an elitist matter. It's...it's whatever I don't know, what I'd like to\ What is culture? It's (...) the literary production or the scientific production, such as biology, the sciences, and...er...er...

*What about television? Is it not culture?*

No, yes, it is culture but, deep within, I'm compromising when I say that\ (...) Yes, culture is something, so to speak, elitist...

*Erudition/cultivation, in a way?*

Yes, erudition and so on. I'm not sure, but I may be drawing a line between their [pupils'] culture and mine, isn't it? Something along those lines. [T.E, 8:30-43; 9:12-33]

In her second interview, she is asked to clarify what she means by saying that culture is 'an elitist matter':

I meant (...) it's knowledge about history, about the history of various peoples, what they produced. (...) Because this business of saying that culture is 'samba', 'sambinha' {the most 'popular', and for some the 'real' Brazilian music/dance/'beat'}, the corner joint/hang-out, the local beach culture and you-name-it [sarcastic] - I find all that too little for us, it's just too little! You must have broader horizons, you see?

(...)

*Yes, but what I'd like to know... Is talking about culture something elitist in itself or is it the case that no one else except the elite can produce culture?*

No, no, no - everyone does. But here, for instance, we have an elite, in this school we have an elite...[in socioeconomic terms] But their cultural horizons are far too restricted, really restricted. [T.E, 25:27-end, 26:1-4].

Rather than knowledge about a 'foreign culture', she believes that this young 'elite' lacks 'general culture', a category which in her view subsumes knowledge



of/about language, or rather, familiarity with the educated lexical repertoire of L1:

Today, for example, I was giving them a test and I noticed that their problem is rather one of lack of general culture, something that has to do with [their poor knowledge of] Portuguese rather than English. They clearly lack something.

*General culture' is...?*

General culture is anything that\ For instance, [a pupil asked] "What' s 'monotonous'?" Then you tell them it's like Portuguese but they answer, "I still don't know what 'monótono' means"! [T.E, 17:43-53]

Despite her reservations about the idea of teaching culture in language lessons, Elizabeth is ready to acknowledge the educational role of 'culture in general' in the EFL class - that is, 'not English or American culture' but general information about what is often associated with 'high culture':

Cultural, for instance, cultural that wouldn't be English culture or American culture, but culture in general... There used to be a very good textbook which the pupils hated but that I found wonderful, [laughs] (...) There were very interesting things in that book. There were...[photographs of] Picasso's paintings...just for the use of **THERE IS, THERE ARE** (...). There was a lot about science; in short, that was a book I would call 'cultural'. [T.E, 8:52-end, 9:1-8]

She also believes that schooling should broaden pupils' 'cultural horizons' and concedes that, being 'more cultured', she might have a role to play in such 'broadening':

I believe I'm more cultured, much more cultured [laughs], because I have this general culture, I mean, interest...

*So you think the school has, say, a role - which role - in\*

The role of widening their horizons, of showing them different things..., different tastes, interests that are different from their own. [T.E, 26:15-23]

Her words might echo the widespread belief among teachers (e.g. Teacher D above) and lay people in general that foreign language teaching is an agent of cultural and linguistic broadening (cf. Byram and Esarte-Sarries 1991:21). Yet, there is little indication in her interviews that she might share with reconstructionists - as for example Byram and like-minded researchers of the Durham project - the belief that foreign language teaching can and should make a contribution to international understanding through raising cultural and linguistic awareness. In fact, her view of



‘cultural horizons’ as having ‘high’ and ‘low’, though fairly ‘universal’, contours owes little to reconstructionist thinking and is more in tune with contemporary classical humanist warnings against the threats to civilization from the influences of mass/popular culture<sup>60</sup>.

When asked in her first interview to comment on the view of culture as ‘the way of life of a society’, Elizabeth went on to express her lack of identification with what she views as a degraded ‘Brazilian way’:

Our way of life is so...so weird that - I don’t know - it’s so crazy that today\ I used to be so much more...er...pro-Brazilian... I don’t know. (...) We’re so short of parameters..., of cultural parameters, or even attitudes that ... What can we do? Anything goes! In fact, I think that nowadays... I don’t know, I don’ know how to talk about my culture anyway, if ‘culture’ means a way of life... [14:10-17]

Though she has legitimate reasons for being suspicious of all the stereotyping, proselytism and national chauvinism that so often goes under the name of culture teaching, she fails to perceive that underlying much culture teaching are homogeneous views of culture and nation, not least because such views allow more easily for comparisons and stereotyping. Not surprisingly, she herself often resorted to stereotyping when drawing comparisons between the *Brazilian* and *the English way*, for example:

*You said you lived in England and that you have great admiration for Engl\*  
Yes, and then I got fed up with the snobbish, silly **English way** - fed up! I mean, with what I believed to be their way - I know the English have changed a lot but this business of being reserved - that’s a pain! It only does people harm; it doesn’t work, does it? It’s the kind of thing that does not work...  
*What about your view of\*  
That I managed to get rid of. Yes, that business of being reserved, everything right, the way it should be; that thing of having a model, you know. It just doesn’t work! (...) I try to be more Brazilian... [and get rid of] this thing about the British spirit, this business of being very economical - that was the spirit of the times, after WWII - being economical, being creative to adjust to whatever you’ve got, of being reserved; ‘Never explain, never complain’ (...) [T.E,12:41-end, 13:18-30]

Another probable reason for Elizabeth’s unease with the question of culture

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<sup>60</sup>Cf. S. Hall 1993, for example, on the debate around the Leavises and *Scrutiny*.



teaching has to do with her commitment to pupil-centred inductive learning and other main principles of progressivism in education. Hence, though she may concede the EFL syllabus might include a certain amount of cultural content in her lessons, she is adamant about not teaching culture overtly - or anything else, for that matter; she is all for inductive learning:

*[In your first interview] you said that if it were up to you there would be no activities in your class involving cultural content, what about that?*

Well, there wouldn't be any... in the sense of...anything intentional, you see?

*You mean, in the sense of indoctrinating the pupils?*

Well, in fact, to me, it comes out naturally, it will be rather a natural response (...)

*Then you would never plan to teach...*

No, no, no.

*...culture together with your activity...?*

No, never. No, nothing like that... (...)

*Why does it bother you so much?*

[Laughs] It bothers me terribly. In fact, I think there's too much talking and too little doing in our schools. So, the pupils don't do their own culture, they don't, they don't practice it, they do not practice the culture of their own age-group even! They do or practice whatever is ready-made, things they buy, ready-made cultural objects... They don't play music, they simply (...) consume it. And the lessons themselves may become just another type of 'consumption', so to speak. [T.E, 26:30-36; 27:3-17]

"Then you do things, you question, you ask..."

To counteract the tendency for passive transmission/consumption of knowledge she favours the progressive classroom model whereby the teacher is a 'problem poser' and the focus is on pupil-centred 'activities' and experiential learning:

I think it is the teacher's role to create difficulties, obstacles, to make pupils face difficulties, puzzles ...er...so that they have to do something, react, act upon - anything! But I won't help them much - they'll have to use their own [resources?]\ [T.E, 28:52-end]

[Pupils usually] sit down, switch on, tune in, the teacher talks and talks; I think they have to participate in the activity so that any culture in it may come out because then you do things, you question, you ask... [T.E, 27:21-4]

She views communicative language activities as a tool for 'socialization' within the classroom culture and/or as a 'handing-over' of knowledge about general rules of social behaviour:

Since I believe myself to be highly cultured [tongue in cheek?] and I think that I have a lot to hand over to them [laughs], then I think I'll always find room for something like that; I won't try to impose anything but rather try to show them other ways of seeing



things... [T.E, 27:39-43]

Well, in fact, there are a few rules...

*Rules of social behaviour...?*

Yes, that kind of thing. Like when you're 'sharing a piece of paper' but you hold it high in front of you and forget about your classmate - little things like that they don't have a clue about - like resting your foot on the desk right in front of your classmate's face... [T.E., 27:49-end, 28:1-2]

Underlying her commitment to inductive learning is a profound dislike of anything that could imply teacher control:

*I've noticed that even in questions of discipline you use this inductive approach [and that] you hardly ever intervene.*

I seldom intervene because - first of all, because I know it won't stop them; second, because I don't want to play the police but I believe they feel I don't like it, that there must be some other way, that it's not right, that it doesn't work, that we can't get very far or have any fun like that. Anyway, I want them to...feel that, but I'm never saying it, I try not to tell them explicitly 'I don't like it' or 'I don't want that', but I'd like them to feel that kind of thing doesn't work too well. [28:113-26]

In other points in her interviews she acknowledges a certain difficulty with exercising any type of control or assuming the role of authority in classroom situations or even in 'real life'. She seems to perceive teacher 'control' and/or 'authority' as anathema to her democratic beliefs. Not surprisingly, she favours a pedagogy which surrenders teaching to the pursuit of an ideal learning situation whereby - as Clark (1987:51) puts it, "language learning is seen as an implicit intuitive developmental process for which human beings have a natural capacity". Again it is not surprising that Elizabeth might be allured by Krashen and Terrell's (1983) 'Natural Approach', or by what she takes for 'the democracy in it':

What I like in Krashen is the power he gives the pupils, it's the democracy in it [2:54-5]; I think that there's no way you can fight against Brazilian reality 'cause if you do you're bound to get a huge ulcer, so I think you have to go with the crowd, I mean, go with and now and then show them alternatives. So, if the pupils want to read the comics, the comics they'll certainly get and then, off and on, you show them something else other than comic strips. The opposite would be like forcing something down their throats - but that I'm not good at - this business of telling them 'we're going to read this and that'; I can't do that - I simply don't know how to. I know how to go with what they [her pupils] suggest and then it's my turn to propose my own activities. So, that's it! And that's one of the things I like about Krashen, it's this consideration for the learner's own pace, for what he knows. [3:7-20]



"It's got Krashen, it's got the 'Natural Way'..."

A further expression of her identification with Krashen's version of progressivism in foreign language education is Elizabeth's description of the content of the English syllabus for class 7:

It includes narratives (...) because the idea is [to] talk about the 'past'. (...) So, there are several activities which involve, talk about things that happened once (...) the 'past' thing. *Does it follow the textbook?*

It does follow the textbook. I follow the textbook because the textbook has a lot - there's hardly enough time to - because there are a lot of interesting things in the book, so you can hardly do everything suggested in the textbook - hardly ever. (...) As I read the introduction of that book, I found exactly what I like there - for it's got Krashen, it's got the 'Natural Way' (...) [2:7-50]

When asked again about the role of the textbook in the course programme, she replies:

It has the function of suggesting interesting classroom activities, and they are very interesting, very interesting indeed. So, we...do those activities at the group's own pace, you see, but I kind of try to do the most interesting ones just and keep going...and do what I can, what I think suits them best. [T.E 3:28:25]

### The content/'activities' equation

Elsewhere in the same interview, content becomes akin to 'activities', in what also suggests the underlying assumption that the means of instruction should equate the desired goals<sup>61</sup>:

*And what is the content of English?*

It's the practice of language - the practice of the language in particular situations...presented through some activity.

*But we eventually talk about something. What is this thing we talk about...;what is it?*  
I don't know. I don't know, I think I don't. It's not, it's not about language. I don't, I don't want to talk about language. If \ I restrain myself; nowadays I think I can manage NOT to talk about language.

*You mean it's not explicit grammar?*

Yes, it's not grammar, but what it is about...I don't know. [5:40-end, ff.6:1-3]

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<sup>61</sup>Cf. Widdowson's (1990:44) means-ends equation: "By the means/ends equation, I mean the assumption that what the learner has eventually to achieve by way of language ability should determine what he does in the process of acquiring that ability".



As she puts it, a 'communicative activity' is "an attempt to recreate something more real" in class, usually through fluency-based, face-to-face interaction, and with the covert purpose of modelling language structures:

*You use the term 'activity' quite often, not only in class but also out of class, when you refer to class 7. I mean, your pupils never have a 'Unit' or a lesson, or an exercise: they do 'activities' and that's also the term used in the textbook [New Wave], it's part of the orientation used in the book. Is that how you use it too?*

It's not because of the book. I always, I've always meant to work like that - using activities just.

(...)

*What is an 'activity'?*

An activity (...) is something that (...) I'd like them to work on (...) Then I have this topic that I want them to develop and I suggest an activity that is an attempt to recreate something more real..., you know? For instance, an interview: "Whose mother, say, likes rock'n'roll?" I mean, the idea is to create in them the need to ask such things and then they'll have to use a certain structure [19:33-end; 20:3-10]

Besides echoing the distinction between acquisition and learning activities as found in the teachers' book accompanying the adopted coursebook for Class 7 (see chapter 7), Elizabeth's words also echo other more prestigious voices in the EFL teaching culture, as for example Stern (1992:177), who uses the term 'communicative activities' to "designate motivated activities, topics and themes which involve the learner in authentic [i.e. 'real'] communication". As the main teaching strategy associated with a 'communicative syllabus' envisaged by Stern as being essentially 'holistic or authentic'<sup>62</sup>, communicative activities are therefore characteristically 'experiential or non-analytic'. Hence, in communicative activities '*par excellence*' the focus "is not on learning specific language features but on putting language to use as the circumstances require" (ibid. p. 178).

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<sup>62</sup>This is not to suggest, however, that Stern might be falling prey of the 'real' communication fallacy which is endemic to a certain brand of communicative approaches (whether they are called 'natural', 'functional' or 'proficiency-oriented'). In fact, in the same chapter of his 1992 book (chapter 7) where he proposes the 'communicative activities syllabus', he also discusses in some detail the theoretical assumptions underlying the kind of 'communicative activities' advocated in the literature. In so doing, he also distances himself from those who uncritically believe in the beneficial role of real life experience for language learning.



In Elizabeth's view, communicative activities not only turn the focus away from written work and from linguistic structures or 'grammar', but they are also akin to fluency 'games' intended to take advantage of the physical energy displayed by teenagers in real life activities/games:

When I started working with games and activities, with things like that [it was like] turning work into play and playing this game, on and on. I enjoy it better that way. So I think that if I can have fun, let's do what I find fun... I also get fun out of what I think is good fun for them, 'cause written exercises can be a pain - like when they are asked to sit still and work - so boring! [T.E, 21:33-48]

I like them to leave their desks, stand up, talk to each other, face each other - a way of trying to channel all that energy they have. [T.E, 20:27-32]

By the way [Tracy] Terrell herself [sic] says 'don't spend more than 15 minutes on each activity' and I've always thought so because Brazilians can't sit still for long without feeling terribly uncomfortable (...) She [sic] usually suggests that they should all stand up and move here and there (...) You may at times worry about all that movement in class, but she [Tracy Terrell] suggests [there should be] a lot of physical activity in class. I think it's great, that's the way it should be. Nothing like Asher, James Asher<sup>63</sup>, who proposes something like aerobics, true - but I cannot deny there's a lot of that in an English class, a lot of Asher's [ideas] that could be useful [4:11-14; 32-46]

Particularly significant is Elizabeth's observation that those communicative activities do not allow for an exchange of ideas between teacher and pupils - the sort of exchange which, in her view, would allow the teacher to 'pass' cultural information. Indeed, she regrets that her pupils should tend to 'cheat'/flout the rules of the game and communicate within the peer group only and exclude her from the 'activity':

*You said something about those activities not being suitable to provide an exchange of ideas?*

Yes, that's difficult, really difficult. Yes, it must be [difficult] - with me; they exchange ideas with each other, though.

*Oh, that's how it works then.*

[Students may] exchange ideas with each other (...) but the whole thing is a bit messy. There's always someone who cheats... So, I mean, it doesn't work as well as you'd expect. When you're planning, when you're preparing it, you think, 'Oh, well, they'll stand up, they'll ask questions, no one will try to cheat' - you've got this idealized picture and then... [T.E, 20:34-48]

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<sup>63</sup>Reference to James Asher, proponent of the 'Total Physical Response' approach to foreign language teaching (cf. Asher, J. 1977/1982)



Perhaps misled by the promises of the 'Natural Approach', Elizabeth fails to realize that her 'idealized picture' of classroom reality does not make any pedagogical provision for pupils' communicative needs in actual language use situations. As the analysis of the observational material will demonstrate, it is only 'natural' for pupils to adjust the rules of the communicative game to the requirements of their shared classroom culture and to behave accordingly, as for example, by resorting to their shared L1 in order to communicate more easily and effectively. Moreover, her commitment to learner-centred, activity-based, and somehow contentless teaching makes her oblivious to what Brumfit (1985:156) has identified as perhaps "the most dangerous current constraint on the language classroom": the tendency for learner-centred teaching to over-emphasize linguistic creativity through 'activities' and 'games' without any reference to what they are for and what they express.

Though she acknowledges other difficulties with the approach adopted, e.g. the fact that her pupils might fail to identify any proper English language content in 'games'/oral fluency-based lessons, she states her belief in the kind of inductive learning through oral communication/communicative activities of the type proposed by *New Wave*, the textbook adopted in Class 7:

The reason why I first liked New Wave so much [is that] it goes well with the way I am. I've always used those grammar exercises that ask you to work inductively - I've always done that! For over twenty years now - I've always taught that way. [T.E, 20:54-5, 21:1-6]

She herself finds it difficult to identify the content of a language syllabus which is not explicitly organized around 'grammar points', like the one in the textbooks used in her classes:

I myself, at times, am not sure about what I'm doing. I am doing 'something' and when I prepared the material I had it very clearly in my mind - [such as] - the 'Present Simple' with 'DO' and so on - but then I get involved in the activity and I lose sight of it...If anyone asks, "What are you doing [in that class?]?", I'll find it hard to remember; I'd have



to think for a while...before saying anything.

*You mean, it is easier to identify grammar points?*

Oh, yes. It's always been like that because that's how it is in the textbook; that's what tends to happen... [T.E, 22:22-39]

Such difficulty may explain the resulting written syllabus or course programme she prepared for her classes and which contains nothing but a compact version of the table of contents of the textbooks adopted (see *Appendix C*).

"The textbook matters a lot..."

Elizabeth's views on the role of the textbook deserve further consideration at this point. In her second interview and 'after-class comments' she suggested that she would gladly do away with the textbook, but she also justifies its use on several counts e.g. it is the "only 'concrete thing pupils have got to work with' and as such it has an organizing function as a reference point for both parents and pupils; it contains the syllabus/exam questions; once chosen, it should be used/'respected' for the sake of the money parents have spent on it:

I don't feel much comfortable about [not using the textbook more often], I keep worrying about parents saying, "I had to pay I don't now how many dollars for that book and they never use it...!" But I try, I mean, their tests are based on the book, which makes the pupil feel safer, and his family too. If a parent asks, "What are you reviewing for English?", [the pupil] may answer, "I have to review this or that unit [in the book]". If the family is willing to help him [with his English lessons], if that kid wants to work for his exams, he'll have something to work on, the teaching points are right there... [T.E, 22:7-16]

She also reinforces her previous statement about the need for teachers to account for the textbook's cost value by making good use of it in class.

It has to [have a lot of room in the course plan] or you wouldn't need to buy one! What do you buy a textbook and a 'Workbook' for? For nothing? As a mother, I'd be really mad at that. No way! So, once chosen (...) it must be used. I can give it a particular treatment but I must - I have to - account for it. (...) Besides, it's the only concrete thing pupils have got. I think this is something that ought to be respected. (...) The pupil should have a chance to organize the materials his way, particularly in Year 7 where there are no notebooks; we don't use notebooks at all, just loose sheets of paper that must drive any mother crazy. She may ask, "Where's the English notebook?" - and all she gets are a few loose pages, which only adds to this mental mess. So you must show them that the textbook does have a particular function. [T.E,24:12-30]

In her view, the cultural content - if any - in EFL lessons is textbook-



dependent:

*Does [cultural content] depend on the textbook orientation in some way?*

Yes, I think it does. The textbook matters a lot, it does matter indeed. Because you cannot deny it has a lot of room in the course plan. [T.E, 8:46-53]

I feel that [*New Wave II*] is not designed to offer anything that concerns...any cultural information to the pupils. The other book [used] in Class 11, *Headway*, that is British, clearly has this [information], definitely. And then we join [with the textbook] in this. [T.E, 8:25-30]

Her fellow teachers see a more straightforward relation between the textbook and syllabus content, as illustrated below:

*When I asked you about the question of syllabus content you went on to talk about the (teaching) material. Do you see a clear relationship between this syllabus - the course programme - and the material, the textbook?*

Well, I started here, right, and I was given all these books, you see? Then it seems to me\ there was no time for me to draw any course programme...

*You were given the textbooks but not any copy of the syllabus?*

No, not really. There was no syllabus...

*You don't know then of any established syllabus...?*

Well,... I mean, I imagine that the objective to be aimed at has to do straight with the book; that's my guess, isn't it, once I haven't been given a syllabus or drawn one myself... So, what I've been trying to do is to work from the book itself...which I guess might be the objective, I mean, the syllabus might be the book itself, I mean, if I got it right.

[T.C, 1:26-46]

*How is it\ is there a programme for you to\*

We've got a textbook to follow - it's always been like that, a textbook to follow (...)

*But when you first started [teaching here], has anyone told you...about the syllabus baseline\*

The syllabus is usually established in terms of grammar, that's all.

*Following the textbook.*

That's right! [T.F, 2:41-55, 3:1-7]

As is common practice elsewhere (cf. Byram and Esarte-Sarries 1991:123), EFL teachers at *Ipanema* are also expected to follow the textbook to ensure that parallel classes cover the same ground. This is how the English language coordinator puts it:

*You've mentioned the word 'programme', 'line', 'syllabus' and that's something that interests me. (...) And what is it? If you had to spell it out to a newly-arrived teacher\ It's beginners, it's beginners using all, the whole planning of New Wave, New Wave 1 and New Wave 2. [T.A, 1:43-7; 2:33-43]*

*By 'the material' you mean ...*

New Wave, the instructional material.

*The textbook.*

The textbook, the textbook.



*You mean the guideline used to define the programme [syllabus] is the textbook then.*  
It is the textbook. [T.A, 4:31-40]

The statements above reinforce the need to address the question of the centrality of the textbook to schooling and to EFL teaching at *Ipanema* in particular. Before taking up this question, however, it is necessary to listen to those who have the traditional role of challenging the centrality of textbooks and teachers alike, and who can potentially turn monologues into multivoiced discourse.

## 6.2 Pupils' Voices

The material analyzed in this section was collected through fairly informal interviews (see 4.5.1) with all forty-two pupils in the classes (here called Class 7 and Class 11) selected for the long-term observation. Though informality was considered important in order to be able to capture pupils' voices more distinctly, it was also necessary to keep some degree of similarity from interview to interview. For this purpose, this set of interviews followed a general framework provided by the pupils' written responses to a questionnaire (see Appendix A). The interviews were brief and most often took place during one of the two ten-minute breaks in the school day, which began at 7.00 a.m. and ended at 12.40 with the pupils rushing out to their extra-school appointments (e.g. English lessons at a private course). On two occasions, having made arrangements with the teacher who had to be away for a whole week, I took advantage of her absence and interviewed nearly all of Class 7 pupils. Despite of their willingness to 'participate' in the study (and be recorded) they could hardly wait for their turn to 'get done with' the interview and be able to enjoy their unexpected 'freedom' somewhere else. Though I eventually managed to talk at least once to 42 of the 45 pupils which were registered in those classes, I had no chance to make any

of the follow-up, more 'directive' interviews I had originally planned to. Given the circumstances, by no means unusual in ethnography - no claims are here made that the interview material can provide an accurate picture of individual pupil's perceptions on 'culture'. Indeed, bearing in mind that interviewing is not the only source of data in this study, the pupils' accounts - however hasty and 'shallow' they may be - can still throw light on the main research question by providing a wide-angled perspective on those pupils as members of the particular educational culture under observation.

The interviews were transcribed and the text was initially examined for the information intended to provide the pupils' profile as members of that particular English learning culture. As it happens, all forty-two pupils in the classes observed - Class 7 (A and B) and Class 11 - are in the 'upper level' of English within their classes. Indeed, the twenty-eight pupils in Class 7 (A and B) have a number of common characteristics as far as their 'English-group membership' is concerned. Besides being members of the 'upper-level' half of the same Year 7, they also do the same textbook/material (*New Wave 2*), with the same teacher, on the same days - even though their lessons take place in different classrooms, at a different time. These Class 7 pupils are also of the same age group (ranging from 12 to 14 years) and all but four of them do English outside school, at one of the various private language institutes in the city. In addition, they share the 'been-abroad' experience since most of them have been 'out there' on holiday, usually in the U.S. to see the Disney World/Epcot Center in Florida. Of the twenty-eight, nineteen have had a short 'study stay' abroad and four of them have once lived there for longer periods usually accompanying a parent doing doctorate work in Britain or in America.



The fourteen pupils in Class 11 are also at the ‘top level’ of English within their year/class, and they have the same teacher as Class 7 groups. In fact, they can be seen as the more mature version (16 to 18 years of age) or the ‘senior counterpart’ of Class 7, as far as their English-group membership is concerned, with a few distinctive characteristics which are in large part due to their status as last year, pre-university pupils, getting ready to sit for the university entrance examinations. They also do - or have already completed - their ‘English courses’ outside school. A few (five out of fourteen) share the ‘been-abroad’ status with their younger counterparts, though only two of them have in fact ‘lived’ in an English-speaking country rather than just ‘been there’ as tourists.

In their interviews, pupils were initially asked to say more about their formal and informal extra-school experience as EFL learners and/or users - i.e. in the ‘English course’ and in everyday life. They were then asked to consider their needs as EFL users ‘in the future’ and to describe the content of a language course that would ideally fit their present and prospective needs. The purpose was to uncover, as far as possible, the pupils’ own agendas for their school lessons since individual agendas are expected to influence the realization of the ‘multivoiced syllabus’, as it is here conceptualized.

### **6.2.1 English ‘for fun’ and ‘for real’**

When asked whether they used English outside school the few who initially responded negatively had mistakenly assumed that ‘use’ implied oral communication. In fact, they all said to make some use of English in their daily lives, if not out of real need maybe just ‘for fun’ (in Portuguese, ‘*de farra*’, or ‘*de brincadeira*’) - a reply that

came out a number of times, especially in Class 7:

*And you say that you sometimes use English outside the classroom - where about?*

Well, at home, for fun.

*Oh, really? Who with?*

With my mother, with my father. At times, I have this game with my friends, like, my friend speaks English and I answer back [C7/A8, 21:41-7].

*You say you speak English with your family here in Brazil?*

Yes, for fun. [C7/B4, 54:29-31].

*And do you sometimes use English at home, to practise, or anything like that?*

I sometimes do. Just a little, for fun. [C7/B10, 69:4-6]

Others would have fun out of using English to display their in-group credentials and exclude non-members:

*You said you use 'a little' English outside the classroom... Tell me more about that, will you?*

Well... it's that we're always taking the mickey out of guys who don't know English, you see - it's rare - but we keep...er...taking the mickey, teasing them in English, you see, 'cause they don't know what we're saying; then we keep... - the guys who know English, I mean - then, the guys who don't cannot...reply, and as we know English we then go on...

*That's outside school, is it?*

Yes, that's outside school. It's a private joke between close friends, just [C7/B6, 58:17-30].

*And what do you use English outside the classroom for?*

Well, I don't know, sometimes... I play with my sister in English, I swear at my brothers in English...

*Why? Is swearing in English any better?*

Not really. [It's] because my parents can't understand some of the slang words. [laughs] [C7/B1, 45:14-23]

Their answers also reveal their willingness to 'suspend disbelief' and try to speak English with family or friends as if they were doing it 'for real'; however, this disposition was not always transferred to the classroom, as the analysis of the observational material of Class 7 will demonstrate.

Even though they all said to have someone in the family who is able speak at least a little English, the majority do not have any contact with native-speakers. To make up for the absence of 'real' interlocutors, they would sometimes resort to having inner dialogues in English, or even "acting a bit silly":



When I don't have anyone to talk to [in English], I think in English [C11/2, 7:4-5]

I sometimes act a bit silly around the house and speak English to myself standing in front of the mirror [laughs] ... I get into crazy conversations with myself [C11/10, 35:37-9,48]

But all of them seem to be able to find ways to put their English to use in more 'real' (though no less 'fun') situations, as suggested by one of the Class 7 pupils:

*And do you sometimes use English at home, to practise, or anything like that?*

I sometimes do. Just a little, for fun.

*What else do you use English for, outside class?*

Well, I don't know. Music, films, computers, you see, nearly everything is [in] English...

[C7/B10, 69:4-9]

The list of situations in which these pupils put their English to 'real' use outside the classroom is emblematic of their status as members of a 'first-world' youth culture making a bid for membership in the exclusive international community of EFL users. Thus the younger learners (Class 7) said they used English outside school:

- . to 'translate' the lyrics of pop/rock songs;

- . to use computers: "For you to be able to use computers you must know English for computers sometimes are all in English" [C7/A8, 3:34-5];

- . to read (movie, rock, sports, computer) magazines, or the odd book:

I'm reading this book in English...

*Which book?*

It's a book about...I've been trying to read it, you see, because it's difficult. I've already read one and now I'm reading\

*What is it about, which topic?*

It's **Lord of the Rings**, have you heard of it? It's long, isn't it?

*Well! Why have you chosen this book?*

I really wanted to read it, I found the story 'cool'.

*Did you know the story before?*

(I'd) heard of it just. [C7/B15,82:36-51]

- . to travel abroad: It's because [when] we travel, you see, most people there speak English.

(...) English is widely used there. [C7/B15, 83:12-7];

- . to play 'imported' games, most often RPG (Role-Play Games) or video games;

. to follow sports, usually basketball games on television broadcast live from the U.S. A number of Class 7 (male) pupils were proud collectors of NBA (National Basketball Association) cards, and one of them shared his 'inside knowledge' with the interviewer:

*I saw you the other day with those, those cards. What about that? Tell me about it, will you?*

Well, it's an American card about the basketball league - the American basketball league - which comes with the figures of that player about the number of points he's scored, the number of right passes per game, how many...the number of blockades... and there's also this resume on the back about the player, how he's managed to get in the team, how he...got a place there, his role in the team...

*Are they imported?*

Yes, it's all in English. (C7/A12,36:20-33).

As for the more 'mature' learners (Class 11), they said they used English outside school most often for reading (novels, pocket books/best sellers; glossy, sports, or music magazines; or even the British Encyclopedia); less often to write (e.g. 'letters to pen-friends' in the U.S. or in Europe) but also:

"To see a film, listen to music (...) I try to translate, understand what they're saying" [C11/4,13:14-8]; "[In the cinema] I try not to read the subtitles, there's lots of mistakes in the translation" [C11/3, 10:37-8];

"When I travel, I use it a lot; sometimes a friend of my father's who speaks English comes along and I always play the interpreter... [For] books - I use it [English] a lot". [C11/6,20:48-51]

There was a consensus among all 42 pupils interviewed about the need to learn English 'for the future'. When asked to justify their answer they usually evoked the status of English as a 'universal language':

Well, I think [I'll need English in the future] because English is a language that... is universal - it is spoken in every country in the world; then if you know English you can then go anywhere in the world and you'll be understood. So, to me, if given the choice between learning French or English, I'd rather learn English. (...) English is the most important\ it's used in several disciplines because there are many books that are written in English [C7/A3, 8:4-16];

"Well, because this language is ... being more and more widely used then, well, soon computers, everything, books, they'll all be in English; then if you don't know English you won't be able to do much, not even read a book or anything..." [C7/A5, 13:4-7];

"Because English is the universal language, isn't it? Wherever you go you must know English to be able to communicate. (...) If you want to find a job, you must know



[English]" [C7/A8, 22:8-14]

"I think it's good to know English because a large part of the world knows English, it's practically a universal language, isn't it... And...also because depending on what I choose to do, I may travel (...) to England, to the United States - if you know English it's easier then - to read books in English." [C7/A13, 40:52-4, ff.41:1-4];

"Well, you know why...er...you...the more, the most languages you know the better for...for everything and also - particularly English, which is the language, er, the universal language, you know, and if you know English you can go to practically every country where...there are people who can speak English." [C7/A11,32:39-44]

"I think I'll need it because it's something international - or sort of" [C7/B4, 54:43-4]

But the universal appeal of English is also US-generated, more precisely, from the Silicon Valley, as this pupil matter-of-factly states:

*"And you believe you'll need English in the future.What for?"*

Well, because now that the United States is dominating everything, then all will become American, then English will be greatly needed. For Computer Science too - that I want to do, it will be greatly needed.

*And what would be the subject matter of your ideal English course? You say it here it's 'pronunciation'. Why do you find pronunciation so important?"*

Well, because we sometimes - it's as if you were a 'paraiba' ('hill billy') here in Brazil, you see, someone who speaks (with the) wrong (accent). Then if you speak wrong in the United States, that'll be a great shame.

*You mean to say that the country you have in mind\ that you intend to visit or live in - whatever - in the future is the United States then?"*

Yes.

*For its importance\*

For Computer Science and all.

*Uh-huh. It's the centre...*

Yes.

*What about Japan?"*

Well, Japan too; but I prefer the Americans. [C7/B3, 52:12-45]

Implied in the statements above and explicitly voiced by one of the pupils (C11/11) is the view of English as a language that is "able to open up new avenues into the first world". The underlying assumption is that the prestige of English as a language of international currency can be transferred to its users and thus freed them from cultural, social, economic, or national barriers. Thus reified, English becomes a passport to the world "out there" - the "first world", that is:

[I'll need English] to work..., and in case I'd like to live there, too...

*Where is 'there' ?*

Well, I don't know, in an English-speaking... country! [C7/B13, 78:11-16]

We need to...practise a lot of English because I will want to study, like, study abroad, out



there, you see, outside this country... It's better to work - here in Brazil there's no, say, er, how can I put it, say, a wide choice of jobs; money here is..., here salaries are low and all... Then, I think it's much better out there, it's much better for you if you know English - that sort of thing.

*When you say 'out there', have you got any particular country in\*

Yes, the United States, sort of.

*What do you know about the United States that makes you think you'll have a better chance of getting a job there than here?*

Well, because it's a developed country, it's a (world) power. Not here; here's all in a mess and I intend to be a medical doctor and then... [C7/B9, 66:9-28];

[I'll need English] to leave this country [for Europe/London] [C7/B8, 64:48-50]

Most pupils also regard English as a means to gaining entry into the adult, professional world, and to securing them a place alongside 'good (white-collar) professionals'; they also acknowledge the instrumental role of reading:

*And... you believe you'll need English in the future?*

Definitely.

*Why?*

Well, because I'd like to be a doctor when I grow up (...) Then \ a friend of my father's told me something, he showed me lots of books in English and said that there - the ones that come from out there are much better than the books here and all, in terms of theory..., in practice...

*'From out there' - where from?*

English...er...American books, books\ because there, techno\ the technology is more advanced; they already know more things than we do here... [C7/A12, 35:41-52]

Because like if you want to be a good professional then you have to read several books and there are books which are better in English, then if you know English, that's better for you [C7/A1, 4:1-4]

I will [need English] because - not only because the longer your CV the better it is for you to find a job but also because I'll need it in what I intend to do, something like...diplomacy [C7/A2, 6:11-14]

Well, I don't know, in my profession, I don't know. Everyone uses English [in the world] nowadays. [C7/B10, 69:14-5]

It's because nowadays, (...) er, for you to be able to get a good job, the better your CV must be, and you've got a better chance in life if you have - if you know English. Then I guess you'll need English in the future, one way or another. (...) And for you to be a doctor you must read many books in English, you must travel a lot to (attend) conferences... [C7/A7,18:32-36];

You need to use English in most professions, I guess, not only to read the books but also to research things..., things you don't know... [C7/B1,48:43-6]

Well, my parents use English to read Medicine books, you see, that are in English... [C7/B5,56:35-6]

It's in this case - if I am a teacher, if I have to read anything in English, then I won't have to spend a lot of money on... other people who'd read for me... I could read it myself, know what I mean? [C7/B6, 59:30-33]



As they see it, English can also give you entry into an increasingly computerized, multinational, English-speaking job market:

*And do you think you'll need English in the future?*

Oh, definitely. Generally, English is very much used all over the place. It's the basic curriculum for you; you've got to know English. Nowadays, it's necessary for you to know English and maybe another language still. I find it fundamental for you, for you to be able to get a job more easily...

*For professional reasons... And have you decided on your profession yet?*

Economics.

*Economics. Uh-huh. And for Economics, would it also be necessary...?*

It would, definitely. If you're working at a bank or something like that, you must have some contact - particularly if it's a multinational bank, you're bound to have some contact with English, no doubt about that. [C11/6,21:25-44]

I'll do Law and if I eventually work for any multinational company, I'll definitely need English. [C11/5,17:22-3]

Well, for my job... Well, because... Well, all the jobs\ because in the future almost everything will be done through computers, you know? Now we use [English]... - well, for several things, books... - and computers will be the thing in the future; then we'll really have to know it well. [C7/B14, 80:45-53]

Well, I don't know...er...there'll be computers, you see, everyone will have something to do with computers...; they'll be very useful, then you'll have to know English. [C7/B7, 61:10-2]

There are even stronger expressions of the belief in English as a passport to success:

*And you believe you'll need English in the future - what for?*

Because, because my cousin - I've got this cousin who's already 23 and I often talk to her - she said that when she was interviewed for this job she's got now, the interview was in English and... then she gets a great salary, you see, for someone who's just finished university she gets a very good salary... Well. I really don't know! I think I'll need it ...

*And what does she do?*

She - I don't know!

*Don't you?*

I know she works in computers, for IBM or something. [C7/A1,3:17-30]

In every profession I think we're bound to use a little English - don't you? (...) I know it's a bit of a dream but, well, I'd like to be a ballet dancer, or an actress (...)

*Uh-huh. And do you really think that a ballerina needs to speak...*

She does, mainly if she... if she is slightly successful she'll need to do a lot of travelling - anyway, [she'll need English] in order to be successful [C7/A6,16:46-55,15:20-21]

When asked to describe what they would like to learn in 'an ideal English course' the majority of Class 7 pupils came up with a description of content which matched their belief that English language learning should give them access to the



(first) world out there'. They also seem to believe that formal English language learning is just a 'rehearsal' for real use of the language in an English-speaking country, with 'real' interlocutors. Accordingly, Class 7 pupils expect their English lessons to improve their chances to 'communicate better' with native speakers.

Echoing so many familiar voices in the EFL world they also tend to equate the content of FL lessons with the practice of the oral and written skills, or else, with the teaching/learning of 'pronunciation' or 'conversation', 'grammar' (often equated with 'verbs') and (everyday) 'vocabulary'.

For many who hope to use English for tourism and oral communication, English lessons should ideally contain more 'talking and less writing':

I'd like more talking and less writing (...) because when we are, for instance, travelling and all... or even when we're doing some business, it's more the spoken language that is used, because out there we don't use the written language that much. [C7/A4,13:24-27]

Well, when travelling, when you travel, you need conversation much more [than writing]; like when you work you need a lot of grammar too, to read books and all, but when you travel you need a lot of conversation, you know, for you to be able to communicate in other countries. [C7/A6, 26:1-5]

[I'd like to learn] spoken English and a little writing and grammar (...) because we need to communicate better...; I guess the [spoken] language is more important. For any job you\ even though you may need to read books and all, in spite of that the truth is I have more fun when I speak English. [C7/A5,15:34-41]

[I'd like] to learn the spoken and written (language) simultaneously [because] there's no point in knowing how to write and not knowing how to say anything 'cause then when you get to the United States you'll be dumbfold, just writing notes and all. [C7/A6,18:45-51]

Any content related to the English language (...) so that you can learn English, like, if you travel, I think it's good to know it all. For you to be able to manage at all in any country I find the oral part the most important. [C7/A13, 40:40-45]

A little of everything: grammar, conversation (...) To train, to rehearse what we're going to say there [abroad]. [C7/A9, 25:45-6, 26:11]

The fact that they expect EFL lessons to account for their need to communicate 'appropriately' in informal situations of language use (in America) may explain their insistence on learning 'slang' not least because, as one pupil puts it, American English



is "more...laid-back":

Slang and the expressions in English that are used in the United States (...) because it's all more formal in England, isn't it? In their English, they don't use much slang. In the United States, though, it's something more, more... laid-back. [C7/B12,75:34-40]

The slang words used in English-speaking countries [when prompted she mentions the U.S. and England] - that are never taught, you know (...) Then you can't understand anything when you get there...because - well, I don't know, they use a lot of slang and then you can't understand anything, you haven't got a clue. [C7/B13, :49-55]

Other pupils have a less restricted view of language boundaries:

The expressions used in the English-speaking countries, in the United States, England..., Canada. [C7/B10,72:33-7]

Whatever is needed for someone to find his way round in an English-speaking country [like] England, the United States - any country where English is spoken. English is spoken even in India. [C7/B15,83:24-29]

They also seem to believe that as a 'rehearsal' for real oral, face-to-face interaction 'out there', their English lessons should provide not only for fluency, but also for accuracy:

(...) if you travel to an English-speaking country you must be able to speak (English) well so that the people there can understand you [C7/A1, 3:53-55]

[I think we should learn] pronunciation] because we sometimes - it's like you're a 'hill billy' or something, you see, someone who speaks wrong. Then if you speak wrong in the United States, that'll be a great shame. [C7/B3,52:28-34]

When asked to say more about the content of the highly-valued conversation lessons, many Class 7 pupils re-asserted their view of English language instruction as preparation for future visits to the U.S. Their words are indicative of the extent to which the pragmatic trivia that goes under the name of teaching language as communication has been incorporated by EFL culture:

*And you said that the ideal content of English should be ...[looking at my notes]... 'conversation'. But what would you converse about; what do you think we should\ Well, basically the things we'd talk about if we lived there (...) what we talk about here, but in English. [C7/B4,55:20-28]*

[Dialogues and written exercises] about the routine, our everyday life, isn't it? To say things like, "Where's the ladies?", something like that...; "I want something to eat"..., you know? [C7/B9:67:26-41]



*And you said the subject matter of your ideal English course would be "vocabulary (that is) used everyday and short conversations". Which vocabulary is that? Can you give me an example?*

Well, I don't know, that which we keep using basically (...) that we'll use later...er...how to get to a place..., that sort of thing, simple things (...) like the stuff we use in an English class. Things we'll definitely use one day; there's no point in...[learning] what we may use, we might use once in a lifetime - that I don't find any interesting for us to learn. [C7/B2,49:1-23]

Other pupils seem more willing to give their classroom talk some worthy content:

I'd like to learn the subject by talking about young people's topics (...) music, sports, and... theatre, cinema - that sort of thing. [C7/B6,58:32-4, 59:1-2]

But conversational activities seem somehow contentless to some pupils who believe there should be room for both "speech and the verbal part, the crust and the filling" [C7/B8,64:29]; others more fiercely demand for 'grammar' and 'writing':

*[You say that] the ideal subject matter/course content for you is 'English' itself - how come?*

Of course! What else would you learn in an English course? Mathematics? [She smiles, sarcastically] (...) I want English itself, damn it! If you've got nothing but conversation, how will you be able to write a letter? [C7/B1,45:52-end, 46:1-5]

I'd like more writing and less talking (...) because, er, I like grammar better than talking but the ideal is...a bit of everything. [C7/A4,10:12-16]

### 6.2.2 Class 7 on culture and lesson content

The question of culture in the content of their school lessons was tackled in different ways in the interviews. When the younger pupils were interviewed the first time, I assumed - perhaps wrongly - that they would feel intimidated if asked explicitly whether they believed culture had anything to do with their foreign language learning experience. I also assumed that young learners are more likely to identify culture in their EFL lessons as any information about English-speaking countries, particularly the U.S. and England, and their people (cf. Byram and Esarte-Sarries 1991, chapter 5). Hence, in the second round of brief group interviews (see 4.5.1. above) at the end of



semester, they were asked to identify the content of their lessons during the semester. When prompted, a few seemed to be able to recall a little of the faint ‘story line’ in their textbook (*New Wave II*) which revolves around the life of a group of young ‘international’ characters in Los Angeles, California. Most of the pupils interviewed, however, did not believe to have received any ‘new information’ in their lessons - cultural or other. In fact, they did not seem to regard the oral fluency ‘activities’ in their lessons as *learning* content, which was most often perceived as ‘verbs’ and ‘pronunciation’, i.e. the accuracy-based material:

*(...) You'll soon be revising for the exam - what is it that you'll be revising?*

P9: Well, the texts, you see, that the teacher gave us...from the textbook.

*When you say 'texts from the textbook' you mean the textbook Units?*

P9: Yes.

P14: Yes, Zero, One, Two, Three...

*And what was there in those Units, what sort of thing will you be revising there...? Do you remember anything?*

P12: No, I can't remember anything.

P14: Verbs...

P9: Verb tenses...

*Verbs? Verb tenses?*

P9: Er...

*Which verb tenses?*

P9: Well...

*You don't remember(...) And was there any information about the United States or about England in this course this semester? Was there anything about the United States?*

P9: No.

P14: I don't think so.

*...Any cities, ...? Which city do they talk about there?*

P9: Well, Los Angeles.

P14: Things...about Los Angeles. [C7B, 88:44-end, ff.89:1-34]

"Those things about tenses and something about California"

On the whole, they perceived the textbook as central to their lessons both at school and at the ‘English course’. Besides, the latter was mentioned by a number of pupils as their primary ‘learning’ source, a fact which seems to render their school lessons redundant and/or irrelevant.

P2: We've done those things about tenses...er...**How often...**

P7: **How often, usually...**

P2: Yes.

P7: **...always, never.**

P2: Yes, those...

P7: We've done the third person, we've done the...verb...persons

P2: We've done the past too...

P7: Tenses, verb tenses...

*Uh. And do you think you've also learnt anything - or was there anything about the United States or about England?*

P2: No.

P7: I think there wasn't anything [like that] because I do [English at] IBEU<sup>64</sup> and then, for me, it's a little, you know, it's a little too weak for me, you know, 'cause I'm at IBEU you see, I'm well ahead there and it's sort of weak for me, the course here at school, that is.

*I see.*

P2: That would have been good but we never got anything, not really.

*Not about...anything? Not any information about the United States? But there's something in the textbook, isn't there?*

P2: There's something about California, I think.

P7: There's a little, a little, and whatever is there is very limited, you know, there's no way you can understand it very well. There's more information at IBEU.

P2: And at 'Cultura'<sup>65</sup> there's more (information) about England too. [C7A, 87:48-end, 88:1-29]

"Cambridge, Los Angeles... I get all mixed up"

*What is it you think you did in English this semester...*

P8: Nothing.

P6: Nothing.

P8: [laughs] I'm not joking at all.

*'Nothing', 'nothing', I see. But 'something' happened in the classroom, for I was there, and what is it that you... How would you sum up...sum up the course content/subject matter?*

(...)

P8: Well, I did learn something; the thing is I do (English at) 'Cultura', you see, this is the selected group of those who do 'Cultura' or whatever... Then, you know how it is at 'Cultura' with that business of repetition and all. Then...

*It makes things easier here.*

P8: Yes, it became easier here.

*But can you remember any point in particular, if anything - I don't mean you've learnt it but was there any information about the United States or about England in this course?*

P8: [He thinks] Yes, I think there was something about... I don't know...

*There's something about certain American cities...*

P8: Cambridge.

*Cambridge? In this textbook?*

P8: Oh, not really. It was in the other one, in 'Cultura'! I get it all mixed up.

*That's all right.*

P8: Of course, I do 'Cultura' and I do this other English [here], you see?

P6: [In] Neither of them.

*But do you remember anything like that in this textbook? Does your textbook contain more information about the United States or about England?*

P8: The United States, right?

P6: The United States.

*And what is this information the textbook gives about the United States - can you remember?*

---

<sup>64</sup>IBEU: 'Instituto Brasil-Estados Unidos'.

<sup>65</sup>'Cultura': short for 'Cultura Inglesa'.



P6: No.

*Nothing?*

P6: Just a couple of cities.

*Really, which cities?*

P6: Los Angeles...

This pupil also seems to resent (what I shall call) the '*activities'/content equation* in his school lessons:

*Los Angeles. And anything about the American way of life, anything like that?*

P6: Well, there may even be something but the fact is that I don't really pay much attention to what goes on in the lesson, you know what I mean?

*That's all right; you're being honest.*

P6: The (school English) lessons are very difficult to\ I find them very boring; they're difficult, they're nauseating, then there's no way I can..., I can't help it, I keep chatting and don't pay attention to what is going on. I don't like it here, there's too much... I don't think that's the right way of teaching,

*By means of activities, like games?*

P6: Yes..., too much of it... That's it, exactly.

*You don't go for that sort of thing?*

P6: Exactly. [C7, 90:16-end, 91:1-56]

### 6.2.3 Class 11 on culture and lesson content

The older pupils - Class 11 - were asked explicitly whether they believed culture had anything to do with their language learning experience at school or elsewhere. The questions were open enough to allow for the expression of their own understanding of 'culture' and their answers will be considered below.

On the whole, these pupils cannot be said to support the assumption that language and culture are necessarily learnt together:

I think that the fact that you can speak another language does not mean you have acquired culture, not really, because you may even end up speaking English but you don't really now what's happening out there [abroad], you don't learn anything about the history of England or the history of the United States, the reason why they speak English at all, why they behave the way they do, how come they have certain customs so different from ours [C11/10, 36:20-30]

"[A language] can only reveal culture when you experience it..."

Instead, they seem to believe that culture and language are *ideally* learnt together, and at best, through direct experience in a foreign country:



Look, I think you do learn [culture]...when you...live among the people [speakers] of other languages - not here in Brazil. I'm studying English [here], I'm not learning American culture (...) And I think English can only reveal culture - and [this is true of] any other language - when you experience it... [C11/1, 4:22-52]

Culture learning in class is 'kind of artificial'

As another pupil puts it, learning about other peoples' culture in class is 'kind of artificial' and it is no substitute for the direct experience of a foreign country:

*And you also say that..."learning a foreign language is like acquiring culture in a way"...* (...) Right, like we're learning here, for example, in 'Cultura Inglesa' and even here in class, in the textbooks, they say something about those countries, but I think that...no matter how much we do study it won't be the same thing if we get to know something by [reading] books instead of going there to see how it is, look, find out, see the museums, know about their habits, taste their food, you know? We may see in books things like 'oh, they like eating, say, more salt in their food, with pepper, nothing like 'rice-and-beans'... We may know about those things but I feel it's something kind of..., know what I mean?

*Kind of...?*

Kind of artificial..., it's something very - it's like learning but then you don't know for sure if it's really like that, you haven't been there to check by yourself, know what I mean? [C11/2, 8:36-end, ff.9:1-9]

Culture is "nothing you can learn in the classroom"

The belief in the unique role of direct experience in cultural learning is voiced a number of times in their interviews:

*You are saying that when you learn English here you have no, you have no - you believe nothing comes up - you don't learn anything about foreign culture?*

No, they do learn something but not so deeply as someone [like himself] who's lived out there or had the opportunity to travel or go in an exchange program or something like that...(...) For when you're out there, you're in close contact with these things all day long, you're in contact with people's day-to-day lives there, you're inserted in a certain context so you're more likely to learn those things, you see? [C11/6, 22:45-57]

*You don't think culture is somehow acquired automatically\*

No, no way.

*...together with language learning?*

Certainly not! (...) Well, you travel, learn the language better, you see the way people live there - nothing you can learn in a classroom.

(...)

I think that in order to have culture, to really know a country's culture, you must go to that country.

*Oh, that would be essential, you think.*

I think so! For you to study, to study in depth the habits of that population... [C11/7, 26:4-17; 29-35]

Among those who believe that culture and language are ideally learnt together through direct experience there are some who do not expect much of their formal



language learning experience. Indeed, they do not seem to expect their language lessons at school or at 'the English course' to give them but a faint glimpse of 'reality out there', not least because reading and talking are not the same as 'experiencing':

*Do you think you learn culture here at\ doing English at school?*

No, I think there's more, I mean, there's more conversation here, basically.

[C11/3,12:12-4]

I'm much more familiar with the American [than with the British] culture because I studied at BRASA'S<sup>66</sup> and at BRASA'S they often talk about the United States, then there were all those texts about the universities there, about...er...the roads, about the way things are...in general, you know? The only thing is, as I said before, if you're in close contact with things you won't forget them any more, only then can you say you've really 'acquired' whatever, you know? Not us (...) You see, I don't know if when I get there one day I'll find exactly that, if when I start talking to people - if I ever go to the university there - if it'll be like what I read in the books or anything. That's why this business of...saying...like...'That's the way it is there' - but I cannot be sure of anything, you know? [C11/2, 9:22-38]

"For you to understand what those things mean to that people you must understand its language"

There are those who believe that classroom language learning may enable them to experience - albeit vicariously - certain 'particularities' of a foreign culture which are somehow encoded in the language:

Each people has their own way of expression, er, and many things, er, you don't have in your culture (...) Then, for you to have access to the culture of that particular people, for you to manage to learn what is more...things that are, like, very particular - very particular\many times for you to understand what those things mean to that people, you know, you must understand its language, I find that important... Sometimes you cannot find any correspondence, you know, with your own culture... For there are certain things that you cannot simply translate just like that, you know - they're very particular things... *And can you learn that sort of thing in the classroom?*

I think so, even though a lot of that has got to be really experienced. I think that only a stay abroad or something like that... But through classroom [experience] you begin to have a certain contact with all that, you know, at least with the most characteristic things, so to speak... [C11/9, 32:19-40]

In an echo of Class 7 voices, most pupils in Class 11 resorted to traditional labels such as 'grammar', 'vocabulary', and 'conversation' to summarize the content of their English lessons at school. Regardless of the non-analytic, inductive approach allegedly adopted (cf. teachers' interviews), a number of pupils perceived their lessons

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<sup>66</sup>BRASA'S: acronym for "Instituto Brasil-Americas".



to be primarily concerned with the explicit teaching of ‘grammar’ and/or ‘verbs’:

We’ve learnt, we learnt the verbs and all and now we’re learning how to use them - what this tense is used for, where to place it... [C11/4, 13:28-33]

Well, it was grammar, huh, the passive voice..., verbs and vocabulary that she [the teacher] gave us a lot of. [C11/5, 17:31-2]

We’ve been looking at clause tenses [sic]..., how to use a sentence in the Past, Present, Future... [C11/12, 42:30-1]

I find the lessons here at school to be very much geared to verbs, compositions, text interpretation... [C11/6, 22:9-11]

*But do you think this course is concerned with grammar?*

There’s a lot of concern with grammar, for sure. By the way, I think there is far too much [grammar], they could give you more of other things - like in Portuguese lately, [there’s more of] literature. We’re in the last year [of secondary school] - I’ve been doing English since kindergarten - that is, grammar! There could be some other content, or part of it, not everything, but I’d be much more interested in literature - I like literature so much! [C11/1, 3:50-59]

### ‘The English course’ as a source of content

The sense of *déjà-vu* resulting from their double-membership at school and at the

‘English course’ was expressed by one of the pupils as follows:

*And...about the syllabus content, you say it’s more like a ‘revision’... You think, you mean, like, ‘grammar review’?*

Yes, because nearly all we’re doing now we’ve already done at ‘Cultura’, you know, though I seem to have forgotten a lot of it; revising may be a good thing. [C11/11, 39:17-22]

When asked for examples of ‘cultural information’ in their lessons they would most often refer to items which came up during lessons in one of the English courses attended:

Right now, I can’t remember anything just like that... But something always gets to you, as for example, things about sports, basketball, baseball, things like that...traditionally American and all... Something is conveyed through, for example\ This is something I can remember from IBEU, uh, because we’ve done something about baseball there and things like that, and it’s something that is part of American culture for that matter. Someone once asked me to write something about Scotland, about the Scottish people, the traditional costumes and all...

*Where did you do that?*

That was in BRASAS [C11/9, 33:3-16]

(...) At IBEU, er, they give you a lot of, er, information, er, about the United States but some other courses do not teach any of that. In some other courses all you do is learn the spoken language and that’s all.

*Uh-huh. Which information is that... about the United States that you learn at IBEU?*



Well, how young people live there [in the U.S.]- there's usually a lot about young people, about the universities there, what life is like inside the universities, er, the food, their manias [sic] - that sort of thing.

*And what about English here at school, do you think you've managed to learn any of...that sort of thing?*

(...) I do not think there is much information... about that, not really. She [the teacher] gives [sic] some bits, not much. [C11/10, 36:45-end, 37:8-10]

"[At school], we keep doing the textbook and if any facts come up we talk about them"

But there was one pupil in Class 11 who did not perceive any 'real content' in the English lessons which seemed to him rather 'like a conversation'. His words also highlight the importance of the textbook in structuring this apparently contentless classroom dialogue:

*You also said that the content of the English programme for this group is [reading from my notes], you say "it does not have any definite content"...*

It doesn't, I think it doesn't. We keep doing the textbook and if any facts come up, we talk about them (...) The whole thing is kind of loose though (...) Here, it's rather like having a conversation here, you know, because we keep asking things, just chatting, I really enjoy coming here. Even though there is nothing like real content now and then we learn a suffix here, a prefix there, we may revise a verb tense...

*[By] "real content", you mean grammar in a systematic way?*

Yes, that kind of thing... And I like it that way - Year 11 pupils wouldn't need anything like it [grammar] any more (...) I'm glad there's nothing like that, you know? Now and then we revise... prepositions... I find this much more productive. [C11/2, 5-34]

"The other day, there was something about Shakespeare..."

Not unlike their younger schoolmates, Class 11 pupils perceive the textbook as an important source of content - cultural or other. These pupils also see a direct relationship between the textbook adopted (at school or at the private course) and the type of 'cultural information' conveyed:

There is more [cultural information] about England, for the textbook, through the textbook itself, as we can see - the other day there was something about Shakespeare, you know? It is conveyed here... I think it depends very much on the course [orientation], like if they go for something more American or more English - that may vary. [C11/2, 9:47-52]

*In the case of English particularly, which countries do you think you learn about?*

About England, isn't it, more about England - because in my [private English] course it is English from England, you learn a lot about England, about their customs, what they like to eat there...

*Uh... And here at school, do you think the information is more often about England as well?*

Yeah, it's the same textbook I use at 'Cultura'... [C11/4, 13:43-55]



"Those English textbooks are disgusting [but] you need something to start with"

This other pupil believes that "you can more or less get to know how they live [by] reading books made there". She also acknowledges the role of textbooks in language learning, but she does not have a high opinion of them:

[These textbooks] include some very specific bits about history...- they're all very boring books, so\

*About history...?*

Yes! About discoveries, inventors, some nonsense like that.

*And that...does not interest you?*

It depends. If you do a chapter that interests you, it's great! If you get a chapter that does not interest you, it'll drag on for a whole month and you'll get fed up with that same chapter... A pain! Those English textbooks are disgusting. Now, at the end of the day you must have learnt something for sure. Again, (...) you need something to start with ...

[C11/7, 27:32]

As this other pupil compares British and American EFL textbooks, he expresses his views of English and the English and voices his 'theory' of the language and culture relationship - a theory which appears to be grounded in his language learning experience at school and at private English courses:

(...)you can notice a certain difference in the way of teaching, like, English itself, original English and American English. I think in American English you learn more like...ways of speaking the language itself, spoken language, whereas British English, it's more centred in...grammar. I think there's more of it, there's more of this formal concern with\

*You mean in this book you use here as well?*

Yes, I think all of them try to convey a simplified way of learning English (...) but [British English] is more concerned with this more formal thing, like, of teaching.

*You mean, you think that's a characteristic of the English people, that formality?*

Yes, I don't know, could very well be because that's where the language originally comes from, you see, so I think this formality is much more related...that is, more closely related - because it's their language, isn't it, so it's something more like themselves... [[C11/9,

33:48-60; 34:16-26]

However important the textbook may be to syllabus content in Class 11, its authority does not go unchallenged in actual classroom use, as suggested by the following extracts:

*I don't know if you've had a chance to examine this textbook you're using...er... It's a book, say, British: have you noticed any information there about, about England, or about any other English-speaking country, in the book?*

Oh, [embarrassed] I've hardly had a look at the book.

*Not even leafed through?*

No. [C11/5,17:41-50]



*I wonder if you've had a chance to examine the textbook - you do have a copy, don't you? Have you noticed it is a British and not an American textbook?*

No, I haven't even looked at the book. [C11/6,22:20-5]

*And...in the textbook here at school, do you think that*  
[abruptly] Which book?

**Headway.**

Uh-huh.

*Do you think it's a book - I mean, it's a British book.*

Uh.

*And have you noticed anything in the book - have you had a close look at the book?*

No, I don't have the book, right? I do it here..., I see that I do the exercises...

[C11/7,26:53-60 ff.27:1-9]

It might be useful to bring back the teacher's views on the role of the textbook in this particular class. As we can recall from her interview data, Elizabeth acknowledges that the textbook 'has a lot of room in the course plan' and that it is thus a constitutive part of the course content - cultural or other. Moreover, she believes to be 'joining in with' the textbook in question (*Headway Upper-Intermediate*) in the provision of 'cultural' information to Class 11. In Elizabeth's own words: "I feel that [*New Wave II*, the textbook used in Class 7] is not designed to offer anything that concerns...any cultural information to the pupils. The other book [used] in Class 11, *Headway*, that is British, clearly has this [information], definitely. And then we join [with the textbook] in this". [T.E, 8:25-30]

These conflicting voices underline the need for us to examine the ways whereby teacher and learners redefine the traditional role of the textbook within their own classroom culture. In order to do so we must now focus on the textbook itself, and begin by listening to what theoretical voices have to say about its role in schooling. That is the topic of the next chapter.

## Chapter 7

### Analysis of Instructional Material

#### 7.1 Further bearings: the centrality of textbooks to schooling

The often claimed - though not sufficiently problematized - centrality of coursebooks to foreign language teaching would make the textbook a necessary focus of observation in any investigation into current classroom practices. Such emphasis is all the more necessary in the classroom context under study where pupils and teachers implicitly or explicitly referred in their interviews to the central role that the textbook plays in their daily classroom activities. Their statements, and the fact that the only written teaching programmes at Ipanema reproduce the specification and organization of content of the adopted textbooks, have reinforced the need for this study to investigate the role of the textbook in the classroom construction of the EFL syllabus.

In what follows, the question of the centrality and authority of textbooks to schooling will be briefly discussed, with special reference to the EFL coursebook. To that end, I will begin by drawing upon Luke et al. (1989) and their discussion of Olson (1986); then some of the views put forward by Dendrinos (1992) will be briefly considered, followed by a more detailed discussion of Kramsch's (1988) examination of the foreign language textbook as a cultural discourse in its own right. The material (i.e. the students' and the teacher's books) used by the classes under study will then be analyzed for their (cultural) content and for what they might be saying about language and culture teaching/learning.

The assertion that 'the text dominates curricula' (Apple 1985:149) has often been made in connection with the issue of text authority and the need to identify the



internal and/or external sources of this authority. As in all discussions involving the question of 'production and distribution of knowledge', it is important to identify, and keep clear of, the dangers of reductionism. Thus, no claims will be here made to the sources of text authority as being 'out there', in society, for they are bound to fall into economic reductionism, particularly when coupled with a focus on the politico-economic forces believed to determine the production and consumption of the text as 'a commodity' (ibid. p. 147). Nor will there be any, not less dangerous, claims to the intrinsic authority of texts which disregard their larger context of use and, in EFL contexts, reduce pupils and teachers to cultural dopes or to passive recipients of alien ideologies. Instead, the critical stance here taken (in agreement with the views of language, education and society which inform this thesis) will try to account for the school text in use as a discourse of multiple authorial voices<sup>67</sup> which may be more or less authoritative depending on the complex relationships between the internal and external forces regulating the school and the text. An attempt will thus be made not to lose sight of the possibility of the textbook-as-multivoiced-discourse being assimilated but also 'reworked' by classroom pedagogical practices. But before looking at the observational material to find out what pupils and teachers make of their textbooks in actual conditions of use, it is necessary to consider some theoretical voices on this issue.

I shall begin with Luke et al. (1989), who consider the question of the centrality of textbooks to the school practice in general:

*When we refer to 'curricular knowledge', that which is intentionally transmitted in the classroom, we generally refer to knowledge within*

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<sup>67</sup>Or rather, as "words of others [which] carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and reaccentuate". (Bakhtin [1986]1990:86)



*the school practice. Despite historically differing educational aims and instructional approaches, (...) the text qua text has remained constant - a fixed locus within the schooling system from which the means and ends of instruction are derived. (pp. 245-6)*

They proceed to question what seems to underlie discussions of the centrality of the textbook, i.e., the assumption that 'the curriculum - its form and content, its validity and authority' is somehow in the text. They identify such assumption, for example, in Olson's (1986) claims to the centrality of textbooks to schooling as being derived from the intrinsic authority of texts. For Olson (ibid. p. 237), the primary source of such authority would be 'the linguistic forms per se' which would make school texts 'biased towards explicit, autonomous meanings' (p. 237) and thus able to transmit culturally significant knowledge across school generations. Identified as an additional source of authority by Olson (ibid. p. 239) is the separation that written texts make of the speech/author and the speaker/text, "and that separation in itself may make the words impersonal, objective and above criticism".

Taking a critical stance to Olson's major claims, Luke et al. examine "how textual forms and institutional context together constitute text authority". It is their contention that "the power of the word of the textbook is premised on the social rules governing the environment of the reader, as much as on the intrinsic structural and linguistic features of the text". Drawing attention to what they regard as an often overlooked implication of schema theories, that "the student's schematic knowledge of the school, classroom and teacher ... mediates reactions to all aspects of the schooling process", they go on:

*[to argue for] a more interactive and pragmatic explanation of text apprehension whereby meaning is contingent on the interaction between the reader's prior knowledge, the institutional setting within which the reading task is situated, the teacher who teaches the text and the distinctive features of the textbook per se. This relationship (...) is*



*delimited and constrained by the rules of schooling which position teacher, text and student in hierarchical levels of power and authority.*  
(Luke et al. 1989:258)

Most useful for the purposes of this thesis is the way these authors privilege the extratextual and interactional practices which mediate the educational use of texts. Their focus is thus on the text in use, on teacher mediation, and on the relations between author, institutional authority and authorization. They also draw attention to the function of the text as an icon, a material artifact within the school context. Finally, and perhaps more importantly, the authors show how the teacher achieves a primacy over text authority. In this way, Luke et al. bring to the fore the pragmatic context of instruction - also a main concern in this thesis. Briefly discussed below are the points raised by Luke et al. which are thought to provide useful guidelines for the understanding of textbook voices in this study.

For Luke et al. (ibid. p. 251), "there is very little 'mystery' about what happens in the text once in classroom use [since] instructional practices delimit the pragmatic context within which the text is read and interpreted". They go on to say that "the student's relationship with the text is by no means personal and unmediated" for in the context of use the text is necessarily reconstituted by the teacher who "tacitly and intentionally ... will emphasize and de-emphasize, select and exclude" (Ibid.).

Moreover, this teacher mediation will help to transform the school text into utterance/speech which tends to be identified by the students as being the teacher's own, and thereby invested with institutional authority. For Luke et al., it is the teacher who establishes a new set of boundaries which re-establish relations of teacher-text authority and student subordination. They draw attention to the ways whereby the teacher achieves primacy over text authority:



*Since information extracted from the text is not associated with an identifiable speaker/author intent, but rather is more readily associated with a teacher's explanations, claims, or opinions about the text, the teacher becomes for the student a surrogate author (...) For it is the teacher/mediator who explains text material, who directs dialogue about a text, who indicates closure of a lesson and who, in this sense, embodies and reconstitutes the text in use. (...) Thus teachers are in fact, and by status, in command of textual knowledge. As such, text and teacher can be seen to constitute a domain of knowledge, and to co-constitute one authoritative identity. (Ibid. pp. 257-8)*

Thus, contrary to Olson, who regards the authority of texts as being largely based on differences between oral and written codes such that the absence of speaker renders the text immune from criticism, Luke et al. suggest that the student belief in the authority of texts derives instead from the nature of school authority relations. In the context of the school, they go on to say, "texts derive their authority from being 'authorized' rather than 'authored'. Hence, the authority of the textbook comes not in virtue of its authorial origin but in virtue of its having been *authorized* by an administrative source, whose authority in turn is institutionally bound" (Ibid. p. 254). Therefore, they claim that it is only within the context of the classroom that a *systemic* - as opposed to Olson's *structural* - analysis of authority must be sought.

But the teacher-text authority does not go unchallenged, as Luke et al. also point out. Whereas the teacher uses the text "to objectify institutional rules, from which his/her authority (...) is also derived", students tend to respond "to text qua social object: a thing to be ritually cared for and venerated, but also scribbled in (...), lost, damaged, or defaced - the term itself a tacit recognition of the anthropomorphic status of the text". In this manner, they go on to say, "the text is a material component of schooling more open to learner criticism than the rule-embodying teacher whom the student must confront in classroom dialogue". Thus, they conclude, as "the text stands as an iconic marker of authority [it] becomes a transferred object of student resistance



to institutional constraints" (Ibid. pp. 256-7).

Before proceeding to examine the classroom context under study in the light of the discussion above, it is still necessary to consider whether and to what extent the foreign language textbook and the EFL textbook in particular can be said to be invested with any 'special' authority.

### **7.1.1 The special authority of the foreign language textbook**

The case for a special authority for the EFL textbook has been put forward by Dendrinis (1992) as part of her examination of the workings of 'ideology' in the production and use of EFL textbooks. Central to her argument is what she refers to as 'the publishing market reality'. She argues that, unlike other school texts which are written and produced locally in the L1 of teachers and students, the EFL textbook tends to be written by native speakers of English and produced by multinational publishers for a global market. Besides, since ELT publishing is 'a multi-million pound industry' (Sheldon 1987), the EFL textbook is traded as an attractive commodity within this circuit. Thus, and not unlike other learning materials which have undergone a process of 'commodization' (Lorimer 1986), the EFL textbook must provide good value for the money invested in it. A disturbing consequence of this process of 'commodization' is thus, in Lorimer's own words, that "expensive technological production processes become not only feasible but also defined as intrinsic to 'high-quality' learning materials". He adds that "the pinnacle of commodization is achieved when the educational product asserts primacy over the educational process. This comes about with the full acceptance of such products and explanatory concepts as elaborate management systems (i.e., fancy teachers' guides)

and the popularity of 'teacher-proof' materials" (Lorimer 1986:135, and 136).

The points raised above are taken up by Dendrinos to argue that the authority of the EFL textbook derives, in part, from its prestigious publishing market. She also suggests that EFL texts and their (near) native authors tend to carry the prestige of English itself and that the foreignness of the language and culture - as perceived by students and even teachers, in many cases - would be an additional source of authority.

However insightful these suggestions may be, the arguments offered by Dendrinos to support her case often sound confusing, inconsistent, and even reductionist - particularly when she attempts to make use of far too wide-ranging views on ideology, education and discourse to investigate 'manners in which (EFL) materials are ideologically invested' (p. 187).

Rather more fruitful is Kramsch's (1988) approach to the foreign language textbook 'as a social genre and as cultural phenomenon in its own right'. Attesting to the centrality of the textbook to classroom language learning is the fact, she says, that "it may be used or abused, followed religiously or humorously, memorized with piety or abandoned with spite - the text remains the bedrock of syllabus design and lesson planning" (p. 63). She goes on to argue that the foreign language textbook is the product of at least five different cultures: the target culture (referred to as C2), the source culture (or C1), the educational culture of the country where the book was published, the classroom culture, and the intercultural, or stages of acquisition of C2 in the learner (ibid. p. 65). Although Kramsch seems to imply that there is something identifiable as the culture of a whole country, or else, that culture could possibly



contain fairly homogenous national and/or linguistic contours<sup>68</sup>, her paper offers fruitful suggestions for the study of FL textbooks.

First, she identifies the 'characteristics of the genre' by pointing out four major features that FL textbooks have in common with texts in other subjects. They are:

1. *Principle-oriented. They provide the learner with basic principles of knowledge [even though] texts differ in what they consider essential knowledge (...)*
2. *Methodical. (...) They embody the notion that knowledge is itemizable and classifiable and that learning is sequential and cumulative.*
3. *Authoritative. (...) The idea that a text could contain misprints or even errors is inconceivable for most learners. By contrast with non-educational material, a foreign language text imparts knowledge that is viewed by its users as ultimately imperative, not declarative knowledge. The message it gives is: 'Master the material between the covers and you will do well on the test and in real-life situations.'*
4. *Literal. Unlike a work of fiction, a textbook is usually intended to be taken literally, at face value. (...) Their truth value lies in the referential relationship to a firmly established outside world of literal forms and meanings. (pp. 65-6)*

Next, Kramsch examines the textbook as a learning tool within the larger (American) context of its conditions of production and reception. The American textbook is thus seen as a product of 'a fundamentally positivistic educational culture' which has the notion of 'a competency-based curriculum' as its core, together with the view that "the acquisition of knowledge is the mastery of skills, (...) a task-oriented activity concerned with the solving of practical problems of a technical variety" (pp. 67-8). This form of rationality, which she concedes to be typical of many other Western industrialized societies, has been repeatedly challenged in America and

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<sup>68</sup>It is fair to note, however, that in a more recent work Kramsch (1993, cf. discussion in chapter 2 above) stresses that she takes 'the term "culture" to encompass more than the speech communities of nation states' (1993:65, Note 2). She adds further on that although she "will draw mainly on persons from different national cultures (...), the cross-cultural approach [she] will describe applies also to the crossing of any boundary between generations, ethnic groups, and social classes" (pp. 206-7).



elsewhere, from Freire's conscientization pedagogy<sup>69</sup> to movements to do away with textbooks altogether.

The role played by the publishing industry as regards the conditions of production of textbooks is then examined by Kramsch, who regards publishers as "trend-followers and trend-setters, [who] have to issue textbooks that both respond to the needs of the market and create those needs, both teach students and train the teachers" (p. 68). Moreover, in their attempt to satisfy both the conservative and the progressive forces in American society, publishers will require that the cultural content of language textbooks should be dealt with "in a rather cautious, if not conservative, manner". As Kramsch goes on to point out:

*What [publishers] look for primarily is authenticity, accuracy, updatedness and typicalness of cultural facts, attractiveness, relevancy to students' lives, survival value, fair representation of target countries speaking the language, and sensitivity to sexist and ethnic stereotypes. [Not surprisingly], among those publishing houses that publish both foreign language and English texts, none has (...) any consistent policy in the development of skills necessary to analyze critically the American culture in the English texts and the foreign culture in the foreign language texts. (Ibid. pp. 67-8)*

She also examines the important role played by foreign language textbook authors in the educational culture and regrets the fact that:

*[Although] they do not shy away from using the appropriate specialized terminology of grammar and syntax, and more recently even functional-notional nomenclature, [these bilingual individuals with no knowledge of theories of culture] generally present cultural facts and events in the anecdotal language of people who have experienced the culture, but not reflected upon it or consciously made sense of it. Many feel that 'interpreting' aspects of the foreign culture is too intellectual or elitist an activity for high school or even for college texts. (Ibid. pp. 69-70)*

As for the role of the American foreign language teacher in the creation of the

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<sup>69</sup>Cf. Freire, P. 1973. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Seabury Press.



conditions of production of textbooks, Kramsch believes that, not unlike teachers in other countries, they have neither the time nor the desire to design their own materials [and thus] expect the textbook to give them the syllabus they need.

Particularly relevant, and congenial to the views of language/discourse underlying this thesis, are Kramsch's views of the textbook as "constituted of a variety of voices and constructs that are expressed through the different chapter segments" (1988:78). She takes up Edmondson's (1985) view of the foreign language classroom as being at the intersection of 'coexisting discourse worlds' to suggest that a classroom exchange between teacher and students be seen as 'a polyphonic dialogue of at least four different voices'<sup>70</sup>. As she puts it:

*The teacher acts as the narrator, who uses the foreign language to teach the students something about the language and the culture. He or she also acts as the master, whose purpose is to carry out the successful management of the lesson and elicit responses from the students. The master is, in addition, the communication partner or native speaker representative who conveys information through the language, not only about the language. Learners attend to what he or she says, not only to how it is said. And there is the voice of the learners, mediated first by the master, then becoming more and more autonomous as they use the language for their own purposes, sometimes even to challenge one of the teacher's voices. (Ibid. p. 78)*

Like a classroom, she goes on to say, a language textbook has many voices. First-year college textbooks of German in the United States, for example, were found to contain the 'full range of subjective and objective voices mentioned above':

*In all textbooks, the target culture is represented (...): the native speaker's voice of the protagonists in the dialog; the narrator's voice in the reading and the cultural notes; the master's voice in the instructions, drills, and exercises; the learner's voices, uttering pre-programmed sentences, using prescribed grammatical structures,*

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<sup>70</sup>The Bakhtinian undertones in this earlier paper were made explicit in Kramsch's 1993 book where, 'by contrast with the single-voiced discourse of traditional language education' (p.27), she argues for a foreign language pedagogy which should sensitize learners to the 'dialogic' nature of communication.



*answering comprehension questions, and also expressing personal opinions and native culture experiences. By contrast, American cultural facts are presented almost exclusively through two subjective voices: American protagonists in dialogs and the learners themselves as they answer personalized questions (...) Textbooks rarely offer any native counterparts to the foreign facts presented [and] thus the development of an intercultural voice in the learners is impeded by the fact that they are not given the tools to develop that voice. (Ibid. p. 80)*

It seems to me that other voices are expected to find their way into the classroom through the teacher-mediated textbook besides the ones identified by Kramsch and they should certainly be more nuanced than the polarization between ‘native’ and ‘target culture’ might suggest. Besides, in actual conditions of EFL classroom use a cacophony of undifferentiated voices may well prevail over the desired ‘polyphony’ which should characterize educational discourse.

At this point, a useful summary of the discussion above could be provided as follows:

1. Curricular knowledge, (and syllabus content, for that matter) though largely derived from textbooks, cannot be found solely in the text;
2. The centrality of the textbook to schooling, and to EFL teaching/learning in particular, should be understood in its relation to the issue of authority and/or the question of ‘authorization’ of knowledge;
3. Stemming from a view of the sources of textbook authority as being ‘institutionally bound’ is the need to examine the text in use, in its (enlarged) educational context.

But before doing so, it is still necessary to examine the material used by the classes under study for what it might be saying about language, culture and foreign language teaching/learning. It is to this examination that I shall now turn.



## 7.2 Analysis of the textbooks

This section is indebted to Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991), Byram et al. (1991), and in particular to Risager's ([1986], 1990) model for the analysis of foreign language textbooks. In order to find out whether and to what extent the target country's culture and society are accurately and comprehensively depicted in FL textbooks, Risager proposes a set of criteria expressed in terms of 'realism'. Based on a model originally developed for the analysis of literary realism, Risager's (1990:182-3) analytical categories contains four dimensions of analysis:

- analysis at the micro-level of the social and geographical definition of the characters, and of their 'subjectivity', i.e. their 'feelings, values, and perceived problems';
- analysis at the macro-level of any information about socio-economic, political and/or historical aspects of the target country/society;
- analysis of international and intercultural issues, i.e. the extent to which the textbook deals with mutual representations, images and stereotypes of foreign and native cultures, and with the issue of the sociopolitical relationship between the target country and the pupil's own;
- analysis of the point of view taken by the author(s), i.e. whether there are any expressions of attitude towards the country and the people depicted, or invitations to critical analysis.

Byram and colleagues combine her approach with 'content analysis' (Holsti 1969) to develop a two-stage approach; the first stage uses content analysis to *describe* the overall image of the foreign culture presented in the textbook, and it is only in the second stage that this image is *evaluated* "against the criteria implicit in the textbook

writer's stated aims and, secondly, in the light of the criteria of realism suggested by Risager" (Byram et al. 1991:302). The approach adopted here will not make use of 'content analysis', mostly because this thesis does not view description and interpretation (or evaluation) as two distinct, consecutive processes (see 3.2.1 above). Nevertheless, it will draw on Risager's criteria of realism<sup>71</sup>, for they may provide clues to the understanding of the 'communicative voices' in the textbooks and to their concern with 'authenticity'.

It should be added that the analysis that follows will concentrate on (the teacher's and the student's) textbooks<sup>72</sup> used by the classes under study and, in particular, on those Units/Chapters which were actually used during the period of observation. Since these are part of a larger whole, attention will also be given to the overall content and organization of the books as part of a series. In what follows, the materials used by Class 7 and those used by Class 11 will be considered in turn. In each case, the teacher's book will be examined first for the writers' stated aims and the rationale behind the methodological approach.

### 7.2.1 *New Wave* voices

*New Wave 2* (henceforth NW) is the second volume of a four-book series "*for teenage*

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<sup>71</sup>Although acknowledging the contribution of Byram and colleagues to the analysis of textbook content in this section, this thesis does not share their views on the role of the EFL textbook as the provider of 'realistic' information in order to allow for the learners' "identification with people from other countries and cultures". Nor does this thesis subscribe to their view that foreign language education should "involve a modification of [the learners'] national identity" to include such identification with other peoples and cultures. (Cf. Byram and Esarte Sarries 1991:180-81).

<sup>72</sup>Maple, R. and Ong, M.F. 1989. *New Wave: Teacher's Resource Book 2*. Essex: Longman Group UK Limited; Maple, R. 1988. *New Wave 2*. Essex: Longman Group Limited. (The *New Wave* series includes an *Activity Book* for each level and audio-recorded material); Soars, John and Liz [1987] 1992. *Headway: Upper-Intermediate. Student's Book and Teacher's Book*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (This series also includes an accompanying *Workbook* and audio-recordings for each level).



*and adult learners of American English in an international context".* As stated in the back cover and implied in the 'Introduction' to the *Teacher's Resource Book* (henceforth TRB), the audience for which NW is intended would be most sensitive to the 'international' appeal of *American English*; not surprisingly, this audience is not formed primarily by school and university students:

*New Wave is a four-level course for adults and older teenagers who are studying American English in their own countries, whether in private language institutes, universities, secondary schools, or businesses. (TRB, p. vii)*

*The series uses international settings and characters to reflect the needs of the learners to use English both in their own countries and when traveling abroad. (TRB, back cover)*

Nor is NW intended for ESL learners; in fact, it would be fair to say that the target audience of NW is as large and undifferentiated as the international diaspora of EFL users and learners:

*[NW] is specifically designed for learners of EFL (...), rather than ESL (...). Whereas ESL texts teach survival skills for living in English-speaking countries like the United States, New Wave focuses on the needs of students living in non-English speaking countries. (TRB, p. vii)*

The Introduction to the TRB is full of buzzwords, particularly when the 'basic principles' behind NW are stated:

*[NW] is based on second-generation communicative pedagogy [...and it] breaks new grounds in several ways. (...) One of the major innovations of New Wave is that it is based not only on the principles of the Communicative Approach, but also on those of the Natural Approach. (TRB, p. vii, and p. viii)*

As the writers underline the novelty of NW, that is, what makes it 'different from other communicative courses', they also announce their book as a user-friendly product in an implied reference to the centrality of textbooks to *teachers*:



*It's easy to use. There are step-by-step directions for all activities, and the course is self-sufficient. Everything the teacher needs is here.*  
(TRB, p. vii)

### **‘Communicative activities’ as content**

The writers’ rationale for the methodological approach echoes beliefs and concerns of progressivism in FL education, which have also been identified earlier at Ipanema. These include a view of language as ‘communication’, and a professed concern with the learner’s ‘needs and realities’ and with the learning process. As stated in the TRB, learners should be encouraged ‘to assume more responsibility for their own learning’ as they ‘learn *how* to learn’. Besides, one of the stated aims of NW is to help students to "gain sufficient communicative competence to perform in real-life situations" (TRB, p. vii). Implied in these claims to teaching for communicative competence is a concern with ‘reality’, also voiced by Ipanema teachers (see chapters 4 and 5). In NW, such concern does not result in subject matter involving, for example, the discussion of "substantive topics which are educationally or professionally significant" (Stern 1992:188). Instead, the commitment to reality<sup>73</sup> in NW is restricted to a focus on ‘real’ communication, here equated with natural language use:

*Students should be exposed to and learn to use natural language whenever possible, not artificial ‘textbook language’. We never use real language without a reason or purpose. The real uses of language are called functions (...) Communicative activities allow for the transfer of new structures and functions to the students’ own realities...*  
(TRB, pp. vii-viii)

The opposition between "natural language" and "artificial ‘textbook language’" in the extract above announces the writers’ commitment to the ‘Natural Approach’ (Krashen and Terrell 1983) and the consequent failure to understand the nature of the

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<sup>73</sup>Cf. Maley, Alan. 1980. "Teaching for Communicative Competence: Reality and Illusion". *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 3(1):10-16.



necessary constraints impinging on classroom language learning. As Elizabeth (Teacher E) has rightly suggested in her first interview (see section 6.1.3), NW "[has] got Krashen, it's got the 'Natural Way'" [T.E,2:49-50]. The TRB is indeed full of statements of belief in the 'key principles' and buzzwords of the Natural Approach, namely the role of 'comprehensible input' and 'affective filters', the distinction between 'acquisition activities' and 'learning activities', and the primacy of the first over the latter in the classroom, e.g:

*Acquisition activities are central: The Natural Approach makes a distinction between acquisition and learning activities. Acquisition is a subconscious process by which the language is picked up from the environment. Learning, on the other hand, is the conscious study and practice of the specific aspects of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. (...) most class time should be spent on acquisition activities. Learning activities are introduced in class and then reinforced in the Activity Book, which is normally done at home.*  
(TRB, p. viii)

In fact, Krashenite 'activities' (with an echo of James Asher 1977) are as much central to the actual content of NW as they are to Elizabeth's lessons in Class 7 (cf. 6.1 above, and analysis of observational material below). Not surprisingly, 'activities' is a key word in the TRB in stark contrast, for example, with the word 'culture' [or 'cultural']. The latter, in one of its rare occurrences, collocates with 'information on U.S. [culture]':

*Short texts provide extensive reading practice and serve several purposes. [...] They provide information on U.S. culture and often allow for cross-cultural comparisons. (p. xi)*

There is just one other such occurrence: a reference to 'cultural points' as a possible source of 'confusion'. It is also one of the few occasions on which the ban on L1 is lifted so as to allow 'low-level students' to ask text-related questions:

*The teacher is the major source of English input in the classroom; therefore, we recommend that teachers speak only English in the*



*classroom. (...) When translation seems necessary, we recommend that the teacher silently write the translation on the board, e.g. at home = en casa (Spanish). However, low-level students should not be prohibited from asking text-related questions about cultural points, grammar rules, or anything else that is confusing them in their first language. (TRB, p. xiv)*

The TRB also includes a few 'cultural notes' such as:

*NOTE: If exchanging telephone numbers is culturally inadvisable, substitute this item in the skeleton with something else, e.g. He/She goes to school/works at \_\_\_\_\_. (TRB, p. 3)*

*NOTE: If this type of information [i.e. each student should describe himself/herself in relation to the 'average' height and weight for the group] is seen as too personal or embarrassing, you might want to find some other factor to average, e.g. length of hair, size of hands, shapes of faces (round, oval, long or thin), etc. (TRB, p. 37)*

### **EFL 'reality': a post-modern pastiche of culture trivia**

The nature and paucity of such 'cultural notes' indicate that the writers assume the existence of a lot of shared knowledge of the American pop/youth culture among their 'international' audience, of teachers and students alike. The most obvious example has to do with the writers' use of supposedly humorous allusions to celebrities in the American film and pop/rock scene, as for example:

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(NW, p.9): Mel Gibb, Al Woody [Mel Gibson, actor; Woody Allen, actor and director];  
 (NW, p.11): Tina Turning and Princess [Tina Turner and Prince, rock/pop and film stars]; Mae East [the late Mae West, film star];  
 (NW, p.21): Grace Johns, referred to as "a black American opera singer" [Grace Jones, pop singer; also an allusion to the opera singer ...];  
 (NW, p.30): Paul and Joanne Newpers [Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward, a long-time Hollywood couple], Carl and Sophie Lorti [Carlo Ponti, Italian film director and Sophia Lauren, his wife and film star].

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Perhaps playing to the Brazilian audience, the writers also include the odd reference (p. 60) to the 'world-famous Pitanga Clinic in Rio' [an exclusive clinic of plastic surgery, run by Dr. Ivo Pitanguy].

The wide range of direct references to real-life celebrities and cultural icons



include: Madonna and Bruce Springsteen; The Pope John Paul II; Shakespeare; Corazon (Cory) Aquino and Ex-President Marcos; Diego Maradona; Queen Elizabeth, Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson; last but not least, two icons of the junk-food culture: *McDonald's* and *Burger King*.

In NW, factual information occurs alongside textbook-made information in a post-modern EFL pastiche, as illustrated by this suggestion for role play (NW, p. 51):

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Student A invites Student B for one of these plays.	
A	WHO'S AFRAID
MIDSUMMER	OF
NIGHT'S DREAM	VIRGINIA WOOLF?
Shakespeare's	Everybody is! And they should be!
most famous comedy!	A modern tragedy with LIZ GABOR

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**Characters and story line**

The writers' choice of characters and story line reflects the characteristics of the international, cosmopolitan audience targeted by the *New Wave* series. Even though the writers' approach is not explicitly thematic, there is an underlying theme (of leisure and foreign travel) that functions as a vehicle for the new language input. It is significant that in the accompanying text in the TRB, p. 7) for the 'Warm-Up 2' activity in the introductory unit, the writers recommend that "students stand up and move around the room 'cocktail party' fashion", asking for and giving personal information. The significance of such 'activity' (which is suggested again on p. 33, and p. 55, for example) within NW will become clearer as the analysis proceeds. At this point, it is sufficient to note that the 'cocktail party' style fits in with the

underlying theme of leisure and foreign travel. This theme also holds together the faint story line, which opens in Los Angeles, California, at 'a party at Norma and Joe's place'.

Norma, who is Spanish, is married to Joe Davenport, and they are conveniently depicted as travel agents. The eight central characters in the book are all young (age range 19-29) urban middle-class professionals or university students. In contrast with their apparently homogeneous social background, they come from a fairly wide geographical spread, as displayed below:

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1. Joe Davenport: travel agent, married, American
  2. Norma Davenport: travel agent, married, Spanish
  3. Sophie Davenport: computer programmer, single, American
  4. Yoshi Watanabe: businessman, married, Japanese
  5. Noriko Watanabe: art teacher, married, Japanese
  6. Barry Winter: psychology student, single, American
  7. Cristina Santos: medical student, single, Brazilian
  8. David Garcia: engineering student, single, Mexican.
- 

In line with the tendencies identified by Risager (1990) in recent European textbooks, the central characters are no longer gathered in a nuclear family group - mother, father, and two or three children - in their house with a large garden. Instead, the characters in NW revolve around a "dinky" couple (cf. American acronym for *Double Income No Kids Yet*) in their travel agency, which thus becomes the modern substitute for the family table.

Again, not unlike the textbooks from the late 70s and 80s examined by Risager, the central female characters are represented as having out-of-home occupations but the question of female (under- and un-) employment, for example, is hardly touched upon (cf. Risager 1990:181). In fact, work is just a counterpoint to leisure in NW, as illustrated below:



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Unit Three: set at Joe and Norma's travel agency but no one is working as such; the dialogue is around holiday pictures; Unit Five: Monique is at work interviewing a famous rock star for a glossy French magazine, and in Unit Six she is again seen at the workplace but talking about her last weekend at a friend's beach house in Deauville; Unit Eight is entitled "*Then I started working for an advertising agency*" but the reader will soon find out the character in question is willing to give up her job to do graduate studies in the States, where she will not have permission to work but she would be able to improve her English instead; Unit Nine: in the opening recorded dialogue Sophie is talking Norma out of cleaning her apartment to go bicycle riding with her.

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Likewise, students are rarely seen doing any academic work; in fact, the only drawings showing students holding books while leaving the University of Chicago campus ('after a final exam', as we are told in the accompanying dialogue) illustrates a passage (Unit 12, p .57) entitled "Maybe you should go out more".

Even though the characters seem to go out quite often, little mention is made of any particular dishes or types of food. They drink, though, or at least are seen in the drawings holding cocktail glasses and 'interacting'. They may be seen drinking 'apple juice all evening' at a party in Deauville, France, or a bottle of Argentinian wine at an Italian restaurant in Buenos Aires; they may be seen at a 'new French restaurant' in LA - but they are not depicted once in the book eating at home or gathered around a family meal.

The central characters are thus portrayed as a young, healthy, attractive and worry-free lot. If they do have problems, these are seldom of a serious type. On the whole, the characters are just textbook characters who serve as vehicles for communicative activities (cf. Risager 1990:186).

### **The trivialization of 'reality'**

Indeed, problematic issues are rarely touched upon in NW, or they are trivialized and made more palatable to the intended audience. For example, whereas the foreigner-as-visitor image is conveyed through characters to whom the students would easily relate,



the foreigner-as-immigrant is mentioned once in a brief reference to the ‘minorities’ in Los Angeles. They are not, however, given any characterization or depicted as individuals. Besides, the important issue of immigrants and ethnic minorities is not treated as a social, or political ‘problem’, but presented in the context of ‘differences’ between Los Angeles and Tokyo:

*Tokyo and Los Angeles are similar in some ways, different in many others. The two cities have a lot in common. (...) Both have tall buildings, freeways, and thousands of neon signs. Baseball and American rock music are very popular in both cities. They also share many of the same problems: too many cars on the freeways, air pollution, and the possibility of earthquakes. Now let's look at three of the main differences: their people, transportation and the weather. Los Angeles is a city of minorities and immigrants. More than half (1/2) of its inhabitants are minorities: Hispanic Americans, Black Americans, Asian Americans, and immigrants. Mexicans, Central Americans, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, Vietnamese, and other Asians make up the largest groups of immigrants and refugees. Many of these people are still learning English. In contrast, Tokyo has almost no minorities. Many foreigners live there, but most of them are not immigrants (...). Tourists love to come to both cities - and not just because there is a Disneyland near each of them! [NW, p.52]*

It is significant that the extract above should be part of a ‘*Read on your own*’ section designed to "provide new language input, (...) information on U.S. culture and [to] allow for cross-cultural comparisons" (TRB, p. xi). In the EFL world of NW, ‘cultural comparisons’ stay clear of controversial issues. Not surprisingly, the reference to ‘minorities and immigrants’ is subsumed under ‘differences’ and distinguished from ‘problems’. As it happens, the ‘people’ of Los Angeles and Tokyo, regardless of their status as natives, (monolingual) ‘immigrants’, or (bilingual) ‘foreigners’, share environmental problems which strike a familiar chord with the cosmopolitan EFL diaspora: "too many cars on the freeways, air pollution, and the possibility of earthquakes".

In spite of the prominence given to Los Angeles and the U.S., and the wide range of names of towns and countries referred to in NW, very little information is



provided on those places - their people, society, geography or their history - which would allow for 'cross-cultural comparisons' of any significance. The geography of the U.S. - and of California, in particular - is briefly covered in an unit about the weather (NW, Unit 9) and in a section about a U.S. tour by two of the central characters, a Japanese couple (NW, p.34). Again, in line with the international outlook of the series, there is a section in the same unit comparing the weather in four cities in different countries - namely, Chicago, Paris, Mexico and Rio (NW, page 48). In Unit 11 (TRB, p.107), where Chicago is favourably compared with New York, the teacher is advised to encourage students to draw comparisons between big cities in their country.

The intense mobility of the characters in their alleged "international settings" allow for broad, unproblematic comparisons between their home countries and the foreign countries they visit. In an example taken from the "Read on your own" section in Unit 9 (NW, p.28) two Brazilians who 'were incredibly nice' to Sophie Davenport during her vacations in Rio write to her from Buenos Aires, where they are now 'having a great time': "We talked to a lot of people too. The people are very friendly". On the whole the characters are all friendly, smiling, and helpful and so are the people they meet in their international travels. The odd problem or 'bad experience' (e.g. urban violence) may be caused by unnamed 'strangers' on home ground; but it may be equally solved by helpful institutional figures. For example, in Unit 7 (NW, pp. 36-7), one of the main characters (Barry Winter) is mugged and robbed in Chicago and is soon helped by two policeman who drive him to a hospital where he is promptly seen by a smiling doctor. Perhaps intended to reinforce the myth of U.S. society as a non-sexist melting pot, one of the drawings illustrating the story shows Barry (a

clean-cut all-American boy) being held by two 'men' (with a darker complexion but unspecified race or nationality). A second drawing shows Barry at the hospital talking to the doctor - a young African-American woman.

As the focus is on contemporary life - and more precisely, on trendy cosmopolitan life-styles - the little historical information about the U.S. occurs in a reading section significantly entitled "*California from A to Z*" (NW, p.20), where 'D' stands for 'DISCOVERY':

*The Spanish navigator Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo saw the coast of California in 1542. He stopped in what is now San Diego. Of course, American Indians were already there.*

Not surprisingly, 'T' stands for 'TRENDS':

*What is popular in California today usually reaches the rest of the country a year or two later. The inspiration for Americans' recreation, changes in life-style, and political movements often originate in California. Jeans, surfing, fast-food restaurants, and anti-smoking laws are all California innovations.*

### **The "cocktail party" metaphor**

As it happens, all looks well in the EFL world of NW: from Disneyland to Tokyo; from Hollywood to Rio de Janeiro. Indeed, the eventual information on U.S. or any other cultures in this textbook is encapsulated in what I shall call the *cocktail-party metaphor* whereby the world is depicted as a social gathering of (upper) middle-class 'equals' of different nationalities who seem to spend most of their time holding glasses and chatting with people they have just met about their last/next trip abroad. Such pasteurized content may add to the cosmopolitan appeal of the New Wave series; whether or not it may be authenticated in the classroom as a provider of trustworthy (cultural) information remains to be seen.

More likely to pass such "authenticity test" is the book used by Class 11, as implied in the following comment by Elizabeth, made during one of her interviews



(cf. p. 165):

I feel that [*New Wave II*] is not designed to offer anything that concerns...any cultural information to the pupils. The other book [used] in Class 11, *Headway*, that is British, clearly has this [information], definitely. And then we join [with the textbook] in this.  
[T.E, 8:25-30]

It is to the examination of *Headway* that I shall turn next.

### 7.2.2 *Headway* voices

*Headway Upper-Intermediate* (henceforth HW) is the second volume of a three-part course intended for an audience of adults and young adult learners of British English. As compared to NW (the textbook used by Class 7), HW (used by Class 11) caters for a more mature audience of ESOL learners "abroad and in the United Kingdom". At first sight, the stated rationale for the methodological approach of the *Headway* series displays certain similarities with NW, particularly as regards the commitment to certain *communicative* principles, e.g. a concern with the learner and the learning process, and the use of cooperative "realistic activities" in the classroom (cf. *Headway Teacher's Book* pp. i-vii). However, the two textbooks differ in the way they rework and reaccentuate what I shall call the 'communicative voice'.

To begin with, in the *Headway* series the commitment to communicative principles does not entail an exclusive commitment to inductive learning. By the same token, and differently from *New Wave*, the fact that natural communication is the goal of instruction does not result, in HW, in implicit or explicit recommendations that the language behaviour of natural use should be replicated in the classroom.

Hence, in the introduction to *Headway: Teacher's Book* (henceforth HTB) the writers state that one of the aims of the course is "to encourage students to analyse the systems of language in use" (HTB, p. i). They also acknowledge the acquisition versus

learning debate and that [SLA] research findings suggest "that the ideal conditions for second language learning are quite similar to those under which a first language is learnt" (HTB, p. iii). However, the writers do not go on to invoke the naturalness criterion to ban pedagogy from the language classroom (cf. Widdowson 1990:44-48). Instead, the HW series encourages learners not only to attend to "the essential rules of form and usage" but also to make use of translation to develop their "cognitive awareness of English" (HTB, p. iv). By the same token, the teacher is advised to make students aware of the aims of the course and the way in which the textbook is organized, "so that they can assume a considerable amount of responsibility for their own learning" (HTB, p. ii). Likewise, the writers address the reader directly in the 'Introduction to Teaching Notes' (by switching to second person pronoun) to underline the role of awareness in responsible teaching:

*[The notes] provides step-by-step instruction all the activities, giving suggestions for lead-in and further exploitation, the rationale for the activity when necessary, and answers to all the exercises. Each activity is preceded by an indication of its overall aim (...), and then the specific aims so that you will always know exactly what you are trying to achieve. (HTB, p. vii).*

Also acknowledged is the effect of background knowledge on language learning processes, in an echo of influential voices in the literature (cf. Carrell 1983, 1987; Widdowson 1983<sup>74</sup> inter alia). It is stated, for example, that in the listening and reading sections of the book, "emphasis is placed on pre-comprehension tasks to motivate students to want to read/listen and to bring to the fore their prior knowledge of the subject" (HTB, p. v). An examination of these pre-comprehension tasks in *Headway* suggests that the writers believe such knowledge to include not only what

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<sup>74</sup>Widdowson's (1983:55) terms for these two types of 'schematic knowledge' are 'ideational' and 'interpersonal'.



Carrell (1983:84) defines as "background knowledge about the content area of a text", but also what she defines as "background knowledge about the formal, rhetorical, organizational structures of different kinds of texts" (1983:83-4). Further on in the teacher's book they hint at the importance of the role of universal schematic knowledge in making sense of a text:

*'Reading between the lines' is something that native speakers do all the time, and this means both you and your students. We unconsciously fill in the gaps, relate one point of a story to another, infer a writer's attitude to what he/she is saying and understand as much from what isn't said as what is.* (HTB, p. 65)

Though they go on to say that "these skills naturally need practising in a foreign language", nowhere in the book do the writers acknowledge the role that culture-specific schemata (cf. for example, Carrell 1981) might play in reading comprehension processes. In fact, despite acknowledging the importance of affective factors in the learning process and listing 'a positive attitude to English language and culture' (emphasis added) as one of the characteristics of a good language learner, they do not make culture teaching a stated aim. The reason may be that they take culture to mean that part of knowledge about the world which is unconsciously acquired through the very process of language learning and they might fail to distinguish between first and second/foreign language processes in that respect. Besides, they also seem to subscribe to the one-language/one-culture equation, as implied in the statement below:

*[Students'] attitudes to learning English will differ. Some may be enthusiastic, enjoying the challenge and eager to learn about a new language and its culture. Others may resent having to spend time, money and energy on a task that they find difficult.*  
(HTB, p. vii; emphasis added)

It is thus significant that the only other occurrence of the word 'culture' in



HTB should be the following:

*A tremendous amount of sub-conscious 'learning' is taking place as a student enjoys a book. Not only is a grammar being consolidated and vocabulary acquired, but from many books the student can also learn something of the culture of the target language. (HTB, pp. v-vi)*

Moreover, as the writers believe "there is no such consensus as to what constitutes a communicative syllabus", the HW series incorporates 'structural', 'functional', and 'task-based' syllabuses, "but particularly the first in its accuracy-based work and the last in its fluency-based work" (HTB, p. iii). Fluency work is based on "skills development activities" in which "students' attention is on the achievement of the task, and not on the language required" (HTB, p. v).

Not unlike the so-called 'acquisition activities' in New Wave, the 'free speaking activities' in HW may take the form of group or class discussion, roleplays and pairwork. However, the role of such activities is assessed with caution in the *Headway* series:

*It is assumed that the individual teacher will be able to judge exactly how much time to allocate to free speaking activities. There needs to be a fine balance here. On the one hand, students frequently ask for 'conversation' in valuable class time, and their request is reasonable. On the other hand, roleplays can seem like games and not 'real work', which can lead to complaints that 'the teacher doesn't make us work hard'. (...) There is evidence to suggest that it is through speaking and listening for authentic reasons that both first and second languages are learned. It is also expected that the individual teachers will know best what interests their own students and will select topics for discussion accordingly. (HTB, p. vi)*

It is interesting that this cautious note about the danger of roleplays being perceived as games and not 'real work' echoes actual remarks made by Class 7 students (cf. 6.2 above, and chapter 8 below) using *New Wave*. The quotation above also implies that the writers believe there is more to classroom language 'authenticity' than the mere presence of naturalistic textual data.



### Communicative activities and ‘authenticity’

Again, not unlike communicative activities elsewhere the activities in HW are associated with "using the language in authentic contexts", "exposition to ever more ‘real’ language" (HTB, p. iii), and to the use of "a wide variety of text-types selected from authentic sources (...) on topics that appeal to educated adults" (p. v).

Indicative of the concern with the authenticity of sources is the long list of acknowledgements which displays nearly five dozen items of copyright material used in HW. The sources include reference books such as English grammars, encyclopedias and dictionaries; (English) literature; (British) official documents and governmental publicity; magazines and newspapers (mostly British), namely: *British Reader's Digest* and *Newsweek International*, *London Standard*, *The Standard*, *Sunday Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sunday Express Magazine*, *Executive Travel Magazine*, *Christian Aid*; plus photographs, logos, and cartoons.

The concern with authenticity is also manifested in the presentation of the verbal and non-verbal information in the book. The format and layout of texts reproduce those of the genuine sources, and these are usually referenced. Likewise, the non-verbal information is presented mainly through colour and black-and-white (copyright) photographs:

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. of ‘real’ British people (with the exception of one photograph of Ernest Hemingway) ranging from famous to unknown, ordinary faces of an apparently multiracial Britain), and places (in different countries);  
 . of ‘realia’, e.g. British currency, British stamps, British paperback covers (and price tags), front pages of British and foreign newspapers, leaflets, posters (from a British AIDS campaign), political buttons, maps and charts.

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Less often, drawings and cartoons (e.g. of *Andy Capp*) taken from ‘real’

newspapers and magazines replace ‘real’ photographs.

In accordance with its realistic approach to content, there are no textbook characters as such in *Headway*. Instead, there are whole texts (newspaper articles or interview extracts) with information about real people, either:

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i) British personalities such as Jeffrey Archer (writer and Conservative politician), Jack Higgins/Harry Peterson (writer), James Mitford (actor), Johnny Morris (identified in the teaching notes as ‘a well-known writer and broadcaster’), Jonathan Porritt (the Director of ‘Friends of the Earth’ in the United Kingdom); and last but not least, Mrs (sic) Thatcher;

Or:

ii) ordinary Britons, such as ‘accident prone Allen Davies’ and his father, ‘street trader Alan Davies’, of Avondale Road, Bromley (HW, p.13); or Mrs Ethel West, a 74-year-old grandmother from Sussex (HW, p.91).

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Alternatively, the *Headway* world is populated with fictional characters, heroes and heroines of Anglo-American literature, e.g. Ferdinand Clegg and Miranda, the hero and heroine in John Fowles’s *The Collector*; Frank de Felitta’s Audrey Rose; Jane Eyre and Mr Rochester; and Thomas Wilson, the central character in Somerset Maugham’s *The Lotus Eater*.

In the *Headway* series, ‘realism’ is associated not only with the authenticity of the text sources but also with a concern that the texts and tasks should be able to “engage the students both as language learners and as people with experiences and feelings of their own” (HTB, p.1). To that end, the factual information presented through genuine textual data (or otherwise) is authentic in the sense of ‘trustworthy’ (cf. Kramsch 1993:185) since the world and the people depicted have reality and credibility. As it happens, the selected texts containing biographical information about famous people are not well-rounded success stories. Instead, they depict credible human beings, with individual problems and weaknesses, displaying values and beliefs which are not necessarily mainstream, as for example the magazine feature about Jack



Higgins in which he looks back on his life and comments on his successes and failures (HW, p. 93), or the text about Ernest Hemingway (HW, p. 96).

In fact, the ‘themes’ and texts of all the twelve chapters in the book can be called ‘authentic’ in the sense of ‘trustworthy’, as above. Though the overall organization of HW is not immediately recognizable as thematic, the writers state at the outset (HTB, p.ii) that each chapter includes a ‘discussion point’ which "launches the theme of the unit". The unit titles, the overall organization and suggestions for use of the material reveal a certain emphasis on ‘accuracy work’. Since the series aims to provide a balance of accuracy and fluency work, the writers justify such emphasis by saying that they believe their target audience of upper-intermediate learners to be "equipped with sufficient linguistic confidence and ability to ‘survive’ in a target-language environment (...) so maintaining or even increasing the amount of accuracy work might eliminate some of [their] mistakes and enrich their language repertoire" (HTB, p.iii). Thus, the chapters are not thematically organized in the sense found in communicatively-oriented ‘survival’ materials - i.e. with each chapter centred on an ‘authentic’ text displaying instances of ‘appropriate’ sociocultural behaviour in the target language-environment.

In HW, there is a dual thematic organization reflected in the layout of the table of contents and of the opening page of each of the twelve chapters. The latter displays a ‘title’, expressed in grammatical terms (e.g. The Tense System, Modifying Adverbs, Articles) and a sub-title, expressed in semantic terms and referring to the *theme* of the unit (e.g. ‘acting and the theatre’, ‘vice and virtue, ‘relationships’) to be exploited through ‘Skills Development’ activities. It should be noted that there is no mention of such thematic labels in the written teaching programme for Class 11. Instead, the

teaching items listed there are displayed under two main headings ('Grammar' and 'Vocabulary') apparently taken from the 'Language Input' section of the table of contents in the student's book (see Appendix C).

The unit themes seem to have been selected on the basis of their 'universal interest' rather than on the specific information they might contain about the "complex fabric of English-speaking life and culture" (cf. *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, p. F7).

What is needed now is a more detailed examination of the writers' approach to such 'topics' or 'themes' in both the teacher's and the student's books to assess their potential 'cultural content'.

The topic and the opening text ('English as a World Language', an extract from an encyclopedia) in Unit 1 set the tone of the book: the text is informative and should be able to stimulate a critical discussion of the theme (of languages and language learning) that runs through the unit. Besides, the reading tasks encourage students to reflect on their reasons for, and their attitudes to, learning English in an indication that the Headway series does not assume its audience to be inherently motivated to learn the 'world language'. In fact, echoing students' voices (cf. interviews material), the opening text suggests that the present hegemonic position of English in the world today may be the driving force behind EFL learning. The unit topic is further exploited through a listening activity in which students are asked to consider, for example, the assertion that the status of English as a world language does not make it a "neutral language [and it has] the national, political, and cultural bias that all others of course have" (HW, p.125). The detailed teaching notes do not include any critical comments on the statement.



The theme of Unit 2 is launched by a discussion of an extract from 'As You Like It' (Act II, Scene 7). As stated in the teaching notes (HTB, p.8), the topic of discussion (ageing and the transience of life) is one of 'universal interest'. The theme of acting and the theatre which runs through the unit is also assumed to be of universal interest. However, the notes for both the listening and the reading tasks indicate that the writers also assume their audience (of teachers and students) to lack the necessary background information required for the successful completion of the tasks. For example, one of the questions asked to the students about the extract from 'As You Like It' is: "What are exits and entrances, parts and acts in the theatre? What are they in life? (HW, p.12) The teacher is given detailed answers in the teacher's book.

A discussion on the truth value of proverbs launches the topic of work in Unit 3. Again, the teaching notes contain background information thought to be necessary for the presumably 'non-native' teacher to conduct the task successfully. The teacher is told, for example, that:

*Although the native speaker knows the meaning of most English proverbs, he will actually use one rarely (...). The reason is this. English proverbs (...) are thought of as the sort of remark that would be made by someone who is rather dull, someone who cannot express in his own words what he thinks or feels, but who has to borrow a proverb from the language to do this. (HTB, p.14)*

It is curious that further on in the same unit (HTB, p.21; HW, p.26) and after providing such lengthy 'cultural note' (though not identified as such in the book) the writers should fail to draw attention to the cultural specificity of the style and conventions (e.g. of address, salutation, position of sender's name) of a formal letter of application for a job.

It is fair to say that the theme of work is here treated realistically in that



students are presented with problems likely to arise in the real experience of working people. It should be noted, however, that despite the overall problem-posing pedagogic orientation of the book, the teaching notes do not draw attention to the ethnocentric comments and cultural stereotyping found, for example, in the text in which a woman looks back on her first job as a school teacher in Tanzania (cf. HW, pp. 25; 126-7).

The topic of unit 4 ('superstition and the supernatural') is introduced through a discussion in which students are asked to compare British superstitions with those of their own countries, and to distinguish between "cultural, personal, and religious superstitions". In the accompanying teaching notes, there is an explicit appeal to the teacher's sensitivity and cultural relativism:

*The aim [of the introductory text] is to make the point that one person's belief is another person's superstition. A certain amount of sensitivity is needed here, as devout members of the class could rightly resent their faith being referred to as superstition. (HTB, p. 23)*

In stark contrast to the anodyne 'travel-agency' approach to the topic in *New Wave*, the theme of travel in *Headway* (Unit 5) is first approached as 'a topic of universal interest' and later discussed from a relativist point of view. In the notes to the unit, the writers assess the modern mobility of global travellers and spell out the *Headway* approach to reality, as follows:

*It is usually quite easy to think of good and bad points, but it requires some objective, 'lateral' thinking to add interest points which are neither good nor bad. (...) What is interesting is that often good and bad points cancel each other out, or contradict each other. For example, a good point is that we can see how people in different cultures live but ... a bad point is that countries are losing their individuality, so cultures and customs are disappearing. It might be valuable to explore this with the points your students make. (HTB, p. 30)*

Food and health is the theme of Unit 6. Again, the discussion invites cross-cultural comparisons and the cultural load of the topic is reflected in the amount and



nature of the notes to the teacher, e.g.:

*Certain items might be difficult to explain, depending on your students. (...) They might not know what skimmed milk or cheddar cheese is; (...) a slice of English bread is much larger than, say, a slice of French bread; and jacket potatoes (baked in their skins, sometimes filled with sauces) might be unknown to your students. (HTB, p.33).*

*Try to encourage discussion about acupuncture, and other forms of alternative medicine. If you have oriental students in your class, encourage them to give their views on this subject, as the East views medical care very differently from the West. (HTB, p.35)*

*Cooking is a matter of great pride, both personal and nationalistic. (HTB, p.36)*

A reading activity based on an extract of Somerset Maugham's *The Lotus Eater* is used in Unit 8 to exploit the theme of 'descriptions' that runs through the unit. One of the stated aims of the activity is "to develop (...) students' appreciation of an English writer". As before, the detailed teaching notes seem to be partly intended to make up for the eventual lack of background knowledge on the *teacher's* part. The teacher is told, for example, that:

*[The Lotus Eater] is a tale which is typical of Maugham - the escape from the ordinary and the monotonous, but at a price. Students might be inspired to read further stories of his, and they would certainly be making a good choice. (HTB, p.45)*

Unlike *New Wave*, *Headway* tackles controversial issues without attempting to trivialize them. Unit 7, for example, invites a discussion of environmental problems from a broad social and political perspective. As they discuss the topic of 'The Environment, and First and Third World Countries', students are asked, for example, to compare the present situation in their own countries with the problems (namely "extreme poverty, overcrowding, pollution, unemployment, disease, and inadequate medical care") facing an imaginary Third World city in the year 2000 (HW, pp.56-62).

Cross-cultural comparisons involving political matters are more openly encouraged further on, in Unit 12, as the theme of 'time' is exploited in the listening activity. Thus, in preparation for the task of listening to "an authentic interview with Mrs Thatcher about Victorian values" students are first informed that "Margaret Thatcher ... became leader of the Conservative Party in Britain in 1975, and [...] Britain's first woman Prime Minister". Next, they are asked to divide into two groups and complete a chart with "some facts and opinions about Mrs Thatcher [and] about Victorian times in Britain" (HW, p.104). Perhaps to preempt any resistance to the task on the teacher's part, the teaching notes read:

*This is an authentic interview, and whatever students' political views or indeed their interest in politics generally, they usually feel a great sense of achievement if they can understand a famous person talking.*  
(HTB, p.72)

The post-listening section invites students to voice their own opinions and reactions, and to compare Mrs Thatcher's views and policies with those of "the main political parties in [their] country" (HW, p.105).

On the whole, it is possible to say that *Headway* - as an inert text - compares favourably with *New Wave* in many respects, not least because it does not provide cultural trivia in the name of 'real' communicative content. In that sense, at least, it should stand a better chance of being authenticated by its classroom users as a reliable source of information or ultimately, as a source of 'content'.

It is now time to move to the classroom itself to find out what is made of these textbooks as their voices are reworked and reaccentuated by teacher and pupils.



## Chapter 8

### Analysis of observational material

It is now time to adjust the ethnographic lens and examine the daily routines of Class 7 and Class 11. The greater part of the data on which the following account is based derive from the classroom observation and transcript notes, collected and organized according to the procedures described above (see 4.5.1 and 4.5.2). The informal style and choice of language in the extracts illustrating this chapter reflect the extent to which my ethnographic voice was deliberately tuned in to the surrounding classroom voices, at that stage of the collection and analysis. By the same token, the multivoiced nature of the observational material is reflected in its final typographic format (see Appendix B for the transcript conventions adopted). In what follows, I shall also refer to the documentary and interview data analyzed in previous chapters so as to bring together the multiple voices which resonate in the classroom and thus draw this thesis to a close.

#### 8.1 Class 7 voices

It may be appropriate to begin with my first observation notes, taken in Class 7B in the first week of the school year:

Traditional seating arrangement: about 30 individual desks arranged in three large groups of paired desks facing a large blackboard; the teacher's desk has been pushed to one side, so that students have easy access to the blackboard. The only door opens to a noisy corridor and on the wall opposite, three large windows open to a very busy road. There are old lockers in the back, a large notice board on the wall beside the door and a couple of noisy fans on the ceiling. As the teacher calls the register I count 13 pupils in class, 7 girls and 6 boys. They do not seem to acknowledge my presence, at the back of the class.

The teacher announces a game: ('Game of opposites', NW1, Unit 8, page 62) She asks



pupils to form two groups and give each group a name; after a lot of noise of chairs being pushed and names being shouted they come up with two groups called "No-Name Team" and "Another Team". T. conducts the activity entirely in English and only switches to Portuguese to praise them for their behaviour during the game: "(...) *pela maneira que vocês se comportaram no jogo, obedecendo as regras e tudo (...)*" {for the way you behaved during the game, obeying the rules and all (...)}.  
 Now T. tells them to get a sheet of paper and "draw a tree and the tree has branches, each branch has a group of foods or sweets - for example, yoghurt, ice-cream, dairy foods..." Pupils don't seem to understand the instructions and some shout, "**Teacher! O que que é prá fazer?**" {What do we have to do?}, "**Eu não sei o que que a senhora quer!**" {I don't know what you want us to do!}. T. rephrases the instructions in English while she draws a tree on the blackboard; still no success. She gives in and switches to Portuguese for a little while. Then she goes on: "Now, if you had a party, what kind of food would you like to have? On the other side of the paper, write what you'd like to have for your birthday party (...)".

T is now ready to write their answers on the blackboard; pupils shout from their seats:

PP: I want a cake! I like popcorn! Beer!

P: **Batidinha de côco!** {A strong cocktail made from coconut milk and 'cachaça', a Brazilian spirit made by distilling sugarcane}

P: **Caipirinha!** {Another 'cachaça' cocktail, with crushed lime instead of coconut milk}

P: **Salgadinhos!** {Brazilian cocktail snacks}

T. writes their suggestions [or some of them] on the board.: FOR MY BIRTHDAY PARTY, I WANT...

A LOT OF BEER                      SOME TOFFEES                      TWENTY BAGS OF POPCORN

A COCONUT CAKE                      A LOT OF VANILLA ICE-CREAM                      POTATO CHIPS

P: Teacher, how do you say '**brigadeiro**' {a children's party favourite} in English?

T: There's no exact correspondence. You have to say 'chocolate sweet' or something like that.

Bell rings before they finish the activity. [C7B, 1:1-end]

In this apparently uneventful lesson - or in my account of it - it is possible to identify the first traits of the framework of rules and conventions regulating membership in this particular language learning culture. One of the conventions to be honoured by participants in Class 7 culture is certainly "the willingness and capacity to suspend disbelief" (cf. Breen 1985), a convention which, in this class culture, means to participate in simulated 'communication' through classroom-specific 'activities'. Indicative of the meaning these 'activities' take on in the daily practice of Class 7 is the disruption of the 'traditional seating arrangement' as participants 'set the stage' and get ready to play their parts.

They seem to be at ease with their roles which, as Widdowson (1987) suggests, involve both an *interactional* and a *transactional* engagement. In the former, as Widdowson puts it, the teacher as *professeur* (master or mistress) engages in "some



sort of social interaction" with the collectivity of pupils and thus "services the hidden curriculum of acculturation and the promotion of established values" (ibid. p. 84). Widdowson (ibid. p. 87) adds that a second interactional engagement takes place in the classroom as "the children themselves interact within their own peer group, where the criteria for pupilhood no longer apply (...) Thus the group may see it as appropriate in reference to *their* norms of behaviour to withdraw commitment, to sabotage the activity, to ridicule attempts to use the foreign language (...)." In *transaction*, the teacher as *enseignant(e)* and the pupil as *apprenant(e)* work "to meet certain explicit learning objectives and to instigate activities directed at achieving specified goals" (ibid. p. 84).

As I intend to demonstrate, in the daily practices of Class 7 such 'learning objectives' or 'specified goals' of instruction (if any) become undistinguishable from the so-called activities (cf. p. 161 above), and these fall short of being meaningless to the participants in what I see, nevertheless, as a *multivoiced* encounter. To make my point, I need to go back to Widdowson's description of the classroom roles above. I would then suggest that in the transactional mode of instruction, as the teacher enacts her role as *enseignante* and the pupils play their parts as *apprenants*, they also assimilate, rework and reaccentuate the multiplicity of voices of their discipline/subject. By the same token, *multivoicedness* should characterize the *educational* encounter between the teacher as *professeur* and the community of pupils not least because it is also their role to re-interpret and take a critical stance to the 'established values', educational or otherwise. Whether and to what extent Class 7 encounters qualify as *educational* remains to be seen though.

At this point, it is necessary to go back to the classroom where we left teacher

and pupils getting ready to assume their roles in what appears to be another activity-only English class.

Having 'set the scene', pupils place themselves in groups and call them 'No-Name Team' and 'Another Team' - a reminder, perhaps, that the willingness to suspend disbelief in FL classroom encounters cannot preclude the need to 're-accentuate (...) the words of others' (cf. Bakhtin 1986:89). The teacher, in her role as '*enseignante*' of a Krashen-inspired foreign language class is reluctant to use Portuguese, which she reserves for her role as '*professeur*', e.g. to praise the children for their behaviour during the first activity, or 'game'. As she moves on to give pupils instructions for the second activity, she switches back to English and to her role as *enseignante*. On the whole, pupils seem willing to suspend disbelief and would at least make an effort to use English in their role as '*apprenants*'. In this role, however - and contrary to the promises of 'natural approaches' - it is also 'natural' for some pupils to require explicitation of the rules (linguistic and otherwise) of the classroom game and use the resources (linguistic and otherwise) at their disposal to do so. Thus, questions such as "Teacher! O que que é prá fazer?" {What do we have to do?) and "I don't know what you want us to do" recur all throughout the observation data.

It is interesting to note that by addressing Elizabeth as 'teacher', pupils signal their dual membership, i.e. in an EFL class and in the Ipanema school community, where it is appropriate to address the teacher as '*professor(a)*', or by using the abbreviated form '*fessor(a)*'. It should also be noted that though not refusing to take part in the second 'activity' (which had the covert aim of reviewing the 'count/non-count' distinction) some pupils should draw on their schematic knowledge (or 'frame',



‘script/plan’<sup>75</sup>) of ‘a birthday party’ and bring in examples in Portuguese.

It seems to me that regardless of pupils’ familiarity with this type of EFL encounter, there is always the need to adjust the rules of the ‘communication game’ so as to make room for their prior knowledge and experience of the world and of L1. After all, as implied in the last pupil-teacher exchange in the extract above, participation in the EFL communication game often involves having to make up for the lack of ‘exact correspondence’ between real-life language and classroom English. Moreover, by shouting out examples of alcoholic drinks unlikely to be found in any local children’s birthday party, some pupils manage to participate in the activity as a signal of membership in the EFL class while interacting within their own peer group (of more ‘mature’ boys) within the class, where those classroom games are not taken for ‘real’ or appropriate content (cf. interview material, pp. 171-2 above, for example).

As suggested above, and as I hope to be able to demonstrate below, the Krashenite ‘activities’ are a major voice in Class 7 and have a constitutive role in shaping the syllabus content. Not only are the so-called ‘acquisition activities’ central to *New Wave* (see p. 193 above) but Krashen’s views are also high on Elizabeth’s teaching agenda (cf. 6.1 above) as they seem to strike a chord with her progressivist beliefs which are, in turn, attuned with the overall educational ethos of Ipanema (cf. 5.3 above). It should also be noted that in her interviews Elizabeth not only acknowledged the importance of the textbook in her lessons but she also voiced a preference for *New Wave II*, used with Class 7, particularly for its Krashenite tone. When asked whether her teaching programme for Class 7 followed the textbook, she

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<sup>75</sup>These terms have been used differently by a number of authors (cf. van Dijk 1977 for ‘frames’; Schank and Abelson 1977 for ‘plan’ or ‘script’) to refer to different types of what Widdowson (1983, for example) calls ‘schemata’ (cf. also Bartlett 1932).

replied:

It does follow the textbook. I follow the textbook because (...) I found exactly what I like there - for it's got Krashen, it's got the 'Natural Way' (...) [2:7-50]

Her enthusiasm for Krashen's 'Natural Way' was particularly motivated by what she takes for 'the democracy in it' (cf. p. 151 above). In her own words: "What I like in Krashen is the power he gives the pupils, it's the democracy in it [T.E, 2:54-5]". The Krashen-inspired textbook would then have the function of "suggesting interesting activities [which would be done] at the group's own pace", and with the least interference on her part.

But before we can proceed to consider the ways whereby the re-accentuated notion of 'acquisition activities' might have helped to shape Class 7 syllabus it should be noted that on a number of occasions from the beginning of the semester, Elizabeth expressed doubts about the effectiveness of the Krashenite/*New Wave* approach adopted. As her attempts to consolidate her practical notion of a learner-centred, 'all-activity' classroom were met with resistance from her pupils, she wondered, for example, whether it was really worth spending a 50-minute class 'on the production of a few sentences' (cf. C7B, 16:38-47). On another occasion, she regretted that her pupils should try to flout the rules, or as she put it, that they would 'cheat' and communicate within the peer group only, and in L1 (cf. p. 164 above). It may be worth quoting the observation notes of one of her first lessons to Class 7A, when her implicit 'theories' were being given their initial tests:

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T greets the class in English and calls the register.

T: "So, books to page 66, number 3, work in pairs...sentence game, Activity 13."

T is interrupted by one and then another P from the other half/level who come for their books. T is upset because they should have done that during the break.

T: "Please, hurry. You should've done it before we started."

When a third P tries to get in T stops her and shuts the door. There are protests from her classmates inside who try to negotiate her way into the classroom with the teacher:



P: "Ela precisa do livro pra outra aula..." {She needs her book/material for the other class}. T answers/justifies herself in English and does not allow student in.

T introduces Activity 13 ("Optional Extras: Sentence game") and gives them directions in English.

T: "You'll need a coin as a marker (...) I'll play against you first to see if you understand...[tosses the coin]. It's a head - because in English you say 'heads or tails' (...) So you put a piece of paper with your name on JOE..."

P1: "Ô 'teacher'! Você não tem que começar aqui?" {Hey, Miss! Don't you have to start right here?}

T: "No." [And goes on with the directions in English]

P2: "Teacher! I don't understand!"

T writes an example of a well-formed sentence on the board to make her point.

T: "The first to form a sentence wins the game."

P2: "Ah! Agora eu entendi!" {Oh, now I understand}

T has trouble in making them understand the directions and start playing the game. They look impatient and gradually lose interest. T walks round the class trying to encourage them in English even though they keep asking for help with the directions/rules of the game, in Portuguese. While she's busy helping a group of girls, some of the boys start playing a different game with the coins - that is, they seem to be using the coins to play a game with 'new rules'. Are they gambling? I can hear: "You owe me 50!", in Portuguese. T is not 'with them' yet. Most girls are playing the game 'properly' now. T gets to the boys' desks, tries to put them back in the right track, is called by the girls again, leaves the boys to their own game for a while. Now she is back and repeats the directions to the boys: "The first to make a sentence wins the game". She moves on to the next group. Boys get noisier and noisier (two of them are now looking for a coin that has rolled down to the opposite side of the room).

J. [also known as 'Skinhead' for his hair-style and ear-ring] to B., or Dennis the Menace [as Elizabeth would refer to him]: "Ah, B., vou te dar um tapa!" {I'll give you a good smack, B.!} B. is wildly tossing coins all over the place - doesn't keep still for a moment. T keeps trying to quieten them down. Whenever she gives her back to the boys' group, they get wilder; now Skinhead is apparently trying to strangle Dennis the Menace. T looks round and stares at them; they sit still for a moment, only to resume their noisy 'activity' with more gusto. While the girls toss the coins and play the game 'properly, in the boys' groups coins zoom up in the air and all you can hear is loud laughter. Eventually, they all seem to be working! One of the girls complains about the heat and asks T to turn the ceiling fan on.

P1: "Ai, que calor! Num dá prá ligar o ventilador, não, fessora?" {It's so hot in here! What about switching on the fan?}

T: "Turn on the fan, please!" [And again] Turn on the fan, please!"

P1: "Turn on the fan, please!"

T turns on the fan - in English, of course.

Girls are now having an argument about the rules of the game. T is called to mediate. Three other girls seem to have 'finished' and are busy chatting. T is now walking round the class holding an open notebook and pen. Now and then, she stops at desks and says something softly to the pupils.

P: "Que isso, fessora? Fazendo chamada de novo?" {What's the matter, Miss? Calling the roll again?}

T: "No, I'm just giving you extra points for your participation".

P: "Teacher, come on! Come here!"

T: [after listening for a moment] "Vocês não conseguiram nem entender o jogo e o jogo já acabou." {How come the game is over if you've hardly managed to get the rules right?} (...)

Bell rings just in time to stop Skinhead from 'strangling' Dennis the Menace who keeps switching off the fan. [C7A:9:1-end,10:1-42]



In her ‘after-class comments’ on that day, Elizabeth sounded apologetic about the pupils’ bad behaviour which she attributed to their lack of familiarity with the rules of what she viewed as a ‘learner-centred’ class. It is fair to note that Elizabeth was new to the school, and that at that early stage in the semester she was still in the process of negotiating the rules of the ‘classroom game’ with her new pupils who had more ‘inside knowledge’ about the school - and the *New Wave* classes - than Elizabeth herself. In fact, these pupils were reviewing last year’s materials (*New Wave I*) till the end of March so that the other half of the class, which had been unable to ‘finish’ the programme (i.e. follow the textbook from cover to cover) could catch up with them and move on to *New Wave II* (cf. Elizabeth’s comments C7B, 16:38-47). For this and other reasons that will become clearer below, her last remark in the extract above (‘How come the game is over if you’ve hardly managed to understand the rules?’) takes on a prophetic significance.

### **Re-accentuating ‘activities’**

Central to Elizabeth’s teaching is her practical notion of ‘activities’, or rather her re-accentuation of Krashenite voices in *New Wave*. As she put it in her first interview (see p. 153 above), an activity is ‘an attempt to recreate something more real’ in class, usually through fluency-based, face-to-face interaction, and with the covert purpose of modelling ‘structures’. Besides, she believes that these (mostly oral-interactive) activities not only turn the focus away from written work (which she finds ‘boring’) and from explicit ‘grammar’ teaching, but they are also akin to fluency ‘games’ intended to take advantage of the physical energy displayed by teenagers in real life activities/games (cf. p 154 above):

I like them to leave their desks, stand up, talk to each other, face each other - a way of trying to channel all that energy they have. [T.E, 20:27-32]



By the way [Tracy] Terrell herself [sic] says 'don't spend more than 15 minutes on each activity' and I've always thought so because Brazilians can't sit still for long without feeling terribly uncomfortable (...) She [sic] usually suggests that they should all stand up and move here and there (...) You may at times worry about all that movement in class, but she [Tracy Terrell] suggests [there should be] a lot of physical activity in class. [4:11-14; 32-40]

Hence the frequent use made throughout the semester of the suggestion in *New Wave* (e.g. TRB, p. 7) that "students stand up and move around the room 'cocktail party' fashion" usually 'asking and giving personal information', as in the extract below:

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[Cf. Warm-up TRB, page 7: "Ask Students to write three pieces of information about themselves on a slip of paper. Tell them NOT to write their names on the paper.

- 1.the kind of food they like;
- 2.what they like to do for fun;
- 3.the time they usually get up in the morning.

Collect the slips of paper and redistribute them randomly.

Students stand up and move around in the room, "cocktail party" fashion, asking their classmates questions until they find the person who wrote the slip they are holding. You may want to write the WASV? formula on the board, with an example, to refresh their memories: W A S V ?"]

T:"I've got your papers here and I want you to ask questions to see if you can find the owner of the paper. (...) O.K., so do you remember this order [Writes on the board] W, A, S, V...WH-question like WHAT and then A for auxiliary, S for...?"

P:"Subject!"

T:"Subject, and V for...?"

P:"Verb!"

T:"Verb. O.K. This is the kind of question you have to ask. So, I want you to come here to the front of the room, here, stand up and come here [noise as they move to the front]... So, imagine, imagine this is a cocktail party or a...party where you have to meet people, right? So, what have you got there? What are you drinking? What are you drinking?

P:"Beer".

T:"Beer? How old are you? [Goes on to other PP] What are you drinking?"

P1:"Coca-Cola".

P2:"Beer"

P3:"Oranjish"

T:"Irish?"

P3 repeats the word. T:"Oh, orange juice! What are you drinking? Beer?"

P4:"*Cachaça*!" {strong Brazilian spirit}

T:"*Caipirinha*!" {a *cacheça* cocktail}

P5:"*Guaraná*!" {Brazilian soft drink}

P6:"*Guaraná*".

P7 (also known as 'Grunge') : "Vodka".

T:"Vodka? Straight? (...) Do you know that in the United States there are beers that are no-alcohol, just for people not to get drunk [Ps give no signs of interest] So, I'm going to give you each one of these for you to find out the owner... Find the owner asking questions. What kind of questions are you gonna ask?"

P:"What kind of food do you prefer?"

T:"What kind of food do you prefer..."

P:"What do you do in your free time?"



T repeats the question as above.

P: "What time do you get up?"

T: "What time do you get up... So... All right..."

They are all standing in front of the class, asking each other questions as instructed. The noise is unbearable. I switch off the tape recorder. [C7B, 47:23-end; 48:1-16]

In her second interview later in the semester Elizabeth conceded that she sometimes lost sight of the actual - covert or overt - purpose of the so-called 'activities':

I myself, at times, am not sure about what I'm doing. (...) When I prepared the material I had it very clearly in my mind [something such as] the 'Present Simple with DO or whatever, but then I get involved in the activity and I lose sight of it... If anyone asks, "What are you doing?", I'll find it hard to remember; I'd have to think for a while...before saying anything. [T.E., 22:25-32]

To a certain extent, her questions were echoed by her pupils all throughout the observations: like their teacher, they too had to make up for the lack of explicit purpose of the learning game. As Edwards and Mercer (1991:158) have pointed out, in the ethos of pupil-centred inductive learning, "part of the problem for pupils is that much of the [educational] process remains mysterious to them. In however friendly and informal a manner, they are frequently asked to do things, learn things, understand things, for no apparent reason other than that it is what the teacher wants them to do. The goals and purposes of the lesson are not revealed. Indeed, neither often are the concepts that the lesson may have been designed to 'cover'". At best, such lack of explicit purpose for the 'pedagogic game' gave Class 7 pupils the additional burden of investing the (cocktail-style) 'activities' with some significance. There were often open requests for explicitness in the form of questions such as: "Teacher, what do you want us to do?", "What's the right sentence, teacher?", "Then it's for us to ask a question, and then...?". Or else, pupils would refer back to their prior experience of language learning in less inductive-oriented classrooms and thus help a classmate to



bring the covert purpose (of modelling linguistic structures) to the open:

T: "OK... Open your books on page 59... - 59, on page 59."

(...) T gives directions for Activity 7, page 59 [in the Student's Book]: *Interview other people and find out how often they do these activities. When each person answers, write his/her name in the right space. For example: Do you go to the movies on weekends, Rosa? If Rosa says, "usually", you write R or ROSA in the space under 'usually'.*

T tells them to go to a space free of chairs at the back of the room and interview each other there - as many interviews as possible. (...) They are now standing 'cocktail-party style' behind my desk and I overhear:

P1: "O que que é prá fazer mesmo?" {What is it that we have to do?}

P2: "É prá fazer frases com 'DO'." {It's to make sentences with 'DO'}

[C7A, 19:24-end; 25:3-11]

Others would make tacit rules explicit while displaying familiarity with classrooms (at private language courses) organized after the *New Wave* recommendation that pupils should be "[trained] to deduce the meaning of new words and expressions from context, rather than relying on the teacher or dictionary to provide definitions" (TRB, p. xi). The teacher in turn would observe the 'English-mostly' rule stated by *New Wave* (cf. TRB, p. xvi):

T rewinds the tape and plays the dialogue again.

T: "OK, so... Do you have any words that you'd like me to explain...? No? So\

P1: "What's 'warm'?"

T [makes a gesture/arms round herself as if in a hug]: "Warm? Not cold... If you're very warm, when you receive a person you say 'Oh! How nice to have you here!... The opposite is 'cold'..."

She writes on the board: WARM = NOT COLD FRIENDLY = WARM WARM X COLD

P1: "What's 'trip'?"

P2 (J.): "Não precisa saber todas as palavras - só o contexto. Aí, você entende o sentido sem ter que ficar perguntando todas as palavras. {You needn't know every word - just the context. Then you can understand the meaning without having to ask about every single word}.

T: "This is how you learn, J. It works well for you. She prefers to know every word (...) and it's OK for her to ask." [C7A, 70:14-32]

As Elizabeth said in her first interview and later reinforced in 'after-class comments' (e.g. C7B, 8:45-47), those language activities were to be used as a tool for the (secondary) 'socialization' of pupils within the classroom culture and as a handing-over of knowledge about *general* rules of social behaviour (i.e she was not concerned with teaching rules of appropriate language behaviour in a foreign social environment). Moreover, she did not see much point in looking for any meaningful 'content' in



books such as *New Wave* for she found their subject-matter (other than the items of language presented) ‘sheer nonsense’. She also suggested that the present generation of Brazilian pupils, perhaps influenced by television ‘timing’, were likely to go for the ‘American orientation’ of *New Wave* and its emphasis on activities that were all ‘quick and bitty’ precisely because these shared with television the rhythm, the speed, and perhaps the superficiality (cf. T.E, 4:3-15).

In fact, she conceded in her first interview that the overt focus on ‘real language practice’ through such ‘activities’ and ‘games’ might strip her English lessons of any ‘content’ that could be named as such:

*And what is the content of English?*

It’s the practice of language - the practice of the language in particular situations...presented through some activity.

*But we eventually talk about something. What is this thing we talk about...,what is it?*

I don’t know. I don’t know, I think I don’t. It’s not, it’s not about language. I don’t, I don’t want to talk about language. If I restrain myself; nowadays I think I can manage not to talk about language.

*You mean it’s not explicit grammar?*

Yes, it’s not grammar, but what it is about...I don’t know. [T.E 5:40-end, ff.6:1-3]

What she did not foresee, in fact, was that a pedagogy which surrenders responsible (educational) intervention in the name of ‘naturalness’ may end up leaving the participants of Class 7 ‘activities’ without anything worth talking about. As the intellectual challenge expected of formal learning is reduced to its lower denominator, the pupils themselves will refuse to ‘authenticate’ what goes on in the English language classroom as genuine teaching/learning, as implied by a number of pupils during the observations:

Before the class, a pupil asks me if I am going to record them again. Usual question, usual answer. But she adds: "*Por que que a senhora grava a aula da gente? É uma zona!*" {Why do you tape our lessons? They’re just havoc!} I reply: "*Mas eu não uso a zona.*" {But I don’t use the havoc.} And she goes on: "*Mas a professora só dá jogo!*" {But the teacher gives us nothing but games}. [C7B, 24:1-5]

Before T arrives I talk to three pupils (J., M, and F.) in the corridor outside their classroom (...) They ask me about my work and J. wants to know if I have got anything useful for my thesis from sitting in their English classes; M. adds that she could not



understand why anyone should bother to watch them at all. When I tell them I am interested in understanding about the ways people teach and learn a foreign language and whether there is any talk about foreign cultures in a classroom like theirs, J. replies that I am in the 'wrong place' for they 'don't learn anything there, anyway'. M. adds that they might learn more about 'those things' in their French classes; J. agrees and says that at least they learn something about France there, whereas she does not remember having learnt anything at all in her English classes at school. F. suggests that they may have that impression because they study English outside school and already know 'the grammar'. There are three or four boys standing beside us now and reviewing the French Revolution for today's history test/exam. M. says that Elizabeth will be 'too late' and J. explains to me that, according to the 'rules' agreed on by Elizabeth and Class 7 at the beginning of the semester, the teacher and pupils alike are only allowed to have a maximum ten-minute delay. T arrives just in time and we all get in. [C7A, 94:1-28]

### **Adjusting the 'rules of the game'**

As I learnt from this and other informal out of class conversations with the pupils, there were a few explicit rules of doing things in Class 7 and they were jointly agreed by the teacher and her class at the beginning of the semester. One of these rules would regulate pupils' coming in and out of class during the lesson. As it happened, the 'Sesame' words which would allow the utterer a few minutes of 'freedom' outside class, preferably when they were spoken 'in English', were: i) "Teacher, can I go to the bathroom?"[sic] and ii) "Teacher, can I drink water?" [sic]. And so they were dutifully repeated, almost like a spontaneous drilling exercise, by nearly every pupil in nearly every lesson observed. Another rule had to do with attendance: pupils were free to attend the lessons as they pleased but had to be prepared to face up to the consequences (e.g. bad results at the end of the year, which by the way were not viewed as real failure since the levelling system adopted for English [see p. 132] would allow for the reallocation of 'unsuccessful' pupils at the lower level of the following grade/year).

### **Textbook: authority and authorization**

Most controversial was the rule which stated that pupils would not be allowed to attend the lesson without 'the book'. That is, the textbook was there given the status



of a passport, a document which gives their holders entry - if not into the community of educated English speakers in the country (cf. Brumfit 1984:11) - at least into the actual classroom. As it turned out, this rule was used by some pupils as an excuse for skipping lessons and a number of times I noticed them hiding their books in their desks only to rush out of class at the 'open your books' command:

T: "Those who don't have a book should leave because I want to be able to work (...)"  
 She's left with two girls just; everyone else leaves and I can see their suspiciously happy smiles... A minute later, two Ps (B. and M.) come back for some money they've left in their backpacks. T tries to stop them with a shout: "NO!NO!" As B. opens his, I see his English book among other school material inside; he manages to grab a couple of notes and rush out before T can do anything. She closes the door they've left wide open and tries to start today's very exclusive lesson. (C7B,31:19-27)

They are back to their seats. T asks them to get their books and look at page 3. The phrase 'get your books' is a cue for 5 or 6 pupils to stand up and leave the classroom. T goes on: "Page 3, Exercise 5"... (C7,48:19-21)

T: "I'd like you to get your books... This is for those who don't have one [lends them some spare, second-hand copies]. Open your books on page 64".[Writes 64 on the board].  
 (C7B,3:10-3)

And at the end of that same lesson:

T: "OK, what about my books...?" Ps return her the textbooks as the other half of the class (7A) gets in. (C7B,3:54-5)

T: "OK... Open your books on page 59... - 59, on page 59."

PP:"I don't have a book! I don't have a book!"

P: "~~Teacher~~, ~~eu vou ter que sair?~~" {Will I have to leave?}

T allows them to stay and attend the class with or without books, "just this one time".  
 [C7A, 19:24-30]

The role of the textbook as a leading 'actor' in Class 7 is encapsulated in a line which would invariably open every lesson throughout the semester: "Books to page ... work in pairs, sentence game..., activity ...". Indeed, the textbook or the workbook was used in every lesson observed but one (when the two groups were joined together to watch a video, at the request of the teacher of Group I). The only times the 'Open-your-books' command was not uttered were on the days the pupils took a test and/or discussed the exam questions - even so, the exam questions were based on the textbook.



But the physical presence of the textbook, its status as ‘a material artifact’ and ‘iconic marker of authority’ (cf. Luke et al. 1989:256; also 7.1 above) in Ipanema classrooms must be considered against particularities of the local (school) cultures. Not unlike what happens in the vast majority of Brazilian state schools, at Ipanema parents are expected to provide for materials and other school-related expenses other than tuition. Unlike their state school counterparts in the country, however, Ipanema pupils often attend private English courses which adopt glossy (and expensive) imported textbooks. As recalled from the interview section above, for the selection of English textbooks teachers take advice with the same EFL publishers’ representatives who supply the local language institutes. Besides going for books which are “pleasant” to use, Ipanema teachers also try to ensure that the material “is not being used at any of the [private] courses” (T.A, 4:47-9). As a result, most pupils end up having to buy not one, but two, ‘communicative packages’ (usually containing a student’s book, and a workbook or ‘activity’ book) each school year. Given the high cost of foreign books in Brazil - to say nothing of the financial instability resulting from an everlasting socioeconomic crisis in the country - there are never as many textbook copies as pupils in class. Moreover, the absence of a stricter enforcement of copyright laws allows for a thriving ‘photocopying culture’ in the country. As it happens, loose photocopied pages sometimes replace the genuine material, a situation which gives the question of ‘authenticity’ a particular angle.

It might be useful at this point to recall the pupils’ voices about the role of the textbook in their lessons. On the whole, they do not view it as an authoritative source of information, either about ‘real’ English or about the English-speaking world ‘out there’; its authority - if any - derives from its status as the only ‘concrete thing’ pupils

can go back to for self-study. That is, on the one hand, most pupils identify the textbook in traditional terms, i.e., they recognize its centrality to the teaching agenda and to the definition of the course programme and exam questions (cf. 6.2.2 above). On the other hand, they see it as a vehicle for the ‘games-only’ lesson format in which they are asked to take part, a format which is not always authorized or ‘authenticated’ as genuine language teaching/learning, as we have seen.

It would be fair to say that to a certain extent Elizabeth shared with her pupils the view that her English lessons were ‘just games’. In fact, Elizabeth viewed the type of ‘activities’ found in *New Wave* as an attempt to divert the pupils’ attention away from ‘conscious’ (school) learning and to turn formal teaching/learning into ‘fun’:

When I started working with games and activities, with things like that... [it was] like turning work into play and playing this game, on and on. I enjoy it better that way. So I think that if I can have fun, let’s do what I find fun... I also get fun out of what I think it’s good fun for them, ‘cause written exercises can be a pain - like when they are asked to sit still and work - so boring! [T.E, 21:33-48]

### **Withholding disbelief**

Indeed, on a number of occasions during the lessons, there were indications of a certain lack of shared understanding in Class 7 about the rules and purpose of the EFL classroom game. Hence the need for some pupils to know whether they were being required to ‘suspend belief’ and use language ‘for real’ (interpersonal communication) or whether they could just play the classroom game ‘for fun’, e.g.:

#### **"Is it for real?"**

T:"O.K.? So, don’t write your names... Don’t put your names...er...Just put the numbers 1, 2, 3. So, you’re gonna answer three questions I’m gonna make, O.K.? There are three questions and you’re gonna answer them, but put names..."

P1:"Write...questions?"

T:"No..."

P2:"É pra ser sincero? [T does not hear/respond] Fessora! É pra responder em português ou em inglês?" {Is it to be sincere? Is it to answer in Portuguese or in English?}

T:"In French..., right?"

P.2:"O.K., in French then." [C7B,46:26-35]



T: "Let's see what you remember..." She writes on the board:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ LIKE PEOPLE?
2. \_\_\_\_\_ KNOW HOW TO USE A COMPUTER?
3. \_\_\_\_\_ FREE ON SATURDAYS?
4. \_\_\_\_\_ KNOW HOW TO DRIVE?
5. \_\_\_\_\_ SPEAK ANY FOREIGN LANGUAGES?

T: "These are questions for you to ask your friend, your peer, about a job. So, I want a job and I want you to ask me these questions to see if I'm good enough to get the job." (They start asking her the questions at once, especially the girls.)

T: "How many points do I get if I want this job?"

P1: "Three".

T: "Three. So ask your friend the same questions and see how many points he gets and if you're gonna give him the job."

(...)

P2: "Fessora, como é que eu vou dizer se eu sei dirigir se eu não posso tirar carteira?" {Teacher, how can I say if I can drive when I'm not allowed to have a licence?}

T checks their answers/points.

P2: "Eu fui contratada." {I've been hired}

T: "Were you hired? Can you drive?"

P2: "Eu sei, mas não posso ainda porque não tenho 18". {Yes, I can. But I'm still not allowed to because I'm under 18}.

Two of the boys [S. and D.] argue - loud and clear and in Portuguese - about D's answer to question 4. S. accuses D. of cheating for scoring a point by saying that he knows how to drive when he's obviously too young to have a licence. T intervenes - in English - and settles the matter by pointing out the difference between 'having the ability' and 'having a licence'.

T: (to D.) "Do you really know how to drive?"

D: "Yes, a little". [laughs] (C7A,55:29-37)

Or is it 'for fun?':

T manages to get them to the end of Exercise 3 and switches on the tape for the next one [FOCUS ON PRONUNCIATION, page 14].

T reads from the textbook: "If the final sound of the verb is /p/, /t/, /k/, or /f/, we pronounce the final letter s as: a) /s/... b) /z/... c) /Iz/ (an extra syllable)".

(...) They repeat after the tape in chorus and have a lot of fun as they go 'zzzzzzzz' as in 'seezzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz' [giggles]. They are writing the answers to the last part of the exercise now while T goes round checking their work and monitoring them.

T: "Finished? So let's listen, now listen to the tape and confirm your guesses". [Cf. directions for Exercise 4: "How do we pronounce the final s of these verbs? Guess. Write /s/, /z/, or /Iz/ after each verb. Then listen to the tape and confirm your guesses."]

Bell rings. T stops the tape and says: "OK, we'll finish this next time". Pupils rush out and say "Buyzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz" as they leave. T and I look at each other and laugh.

(C7B, 67:36-end; 68:1-6)

T: "OK, so open your books on page 58..."

(Noise)

P: [loud to the class] "'Fifty-eight' é 'cinquenta e oito'" [the # in Portuguese]

T: " (...) OK, fifty-eight, right? Repeat after me [reads] Play soccer".

PP [in chorus]: "Play soccer".

T: "Listen to music"

PP: "Listen to music!"

T: "Watch tv"

PP: [louder] "WATCH TV!"

T: "Go running"

PP: [even louder] "GO RUNNING!"

T: [pauses and stares at them] "Go to the movies"



PP: "GO TO THE MOVIES!" [Very loud]  
 [T pauses again] T: "Go to the disco"  
 Pupils repeat [or rather shout] after her.  
 T: "Go to the beach"  
 Pupils repeat after her.  
 T: "Work in the garden"  
 [And so on till end of phrases in 'First practice', page 58]  
 T: "OK! Now... Do you see?"  
 PP: "Do you see..." [giggles]  
 [T pauses again and stares at class]  
 (Silence)  
 T: "Can you see the first dialogue here, OK? [Activity 4:First Practice] So(...) [C7B, 14:55-end, 56:1-26]"

On the whole, pupils seemed more willing to 'suspend disbelief' and use English 'for real' when the rules of the language learning game were more explicitly related to well-established FL classroom conventions, that is, when the *transactional* (cf. Widdowson 1987 above) purpose of the activity was made explicit. Indeed, one of the tacit rules regulating participation in Class 7 'activities' gave Portuguese a minor supportive role in the *interactional* mode of engagement, whereas English would be the exclusive *transactional* language, in Widdowson's terms. As we have seen above, the teacher would try to conduct the lesson 'proper' entirely in English, and use Portuguese mostly for 'managerial' and disciplining purposes, i.e. to voice her authority as '*professeur*'. As with other rules, however, this one was also conveniently adjusted by the participants when they used language in the small talk of classroom life:

T reads aloud a list of names of those who are updated with their homework. There is a lot of noise and loud protests in Portuguese. T switches to Portuguese and scolds them loud and clear. Back to English and to the 'official' beginning of today's lesson now:  
 T: "OK . J. , what sport can you play?" (Cf. "Warm-up 3", TRB, page 23).  
 J: "Soccer".  
 T writes questions and answers on the board, and goes on:  
 T: "And, do you play soccer every day?"  
 J: "No, I don't".  
 T: "How often do you play soccer?"  
 J: "Three times a week".  
 T: "Who do you play with?"  
 J: "I usually play with my classmates."  
 T: "J, ask M what sport she can't do."  
 J: "What sport can you play?"



T: "Can't, negative".  
 J: "What sport can't you play?"  
 M: "I can't play soccer".  
 T: "Don't you like to play soccer?"  
 M: "So, so".  
 T: "So, so. A little bit. J., tell M. you can teach her."  
 J: "**Ah, não tenho saco, fessora. O Thomas pode.**" {No way, not me, teacher. Thomas can do it}.  
 T: "OK, so tell her Thomas can teach her." [laughs] Say 'Maybe Thomas can teach you'.  
 J: "Maybe Thomas can teach you...20 dollars an hour!" [laughs]  
 M: "No, thank you. I don't like".  
 T adds to the 'skeletons' on the board: "I don't like it that much." [C7A, 59:9-40]

It was often the case that the closer to 'real' language use the communication game/activity would get, the more real-life response it would get from the pupils; that is, they would privilege the 'interactional' purpose of the activity pupils and adjust the rules of the game to their own linguistic resources and interactional purposes:

T: "What does your grandmother cook?"  
 P1/M.: "'Paella'"  
 P2: "O que que é isso?" {What's that?}  
 M. describes his grandmother's Spanish paella - in Portuguese. T tries to help with the words in English for the ingredients, but she soon gives up as other pupils ask M. - again in Portuguese - about details of the dish itself or about his Spanish relatives, without showing any interest for the English words. [C7B, 90:1-8]

There were also those pupils who would defer their agreement to participate in the make-believe classroom game and use the foreign language to question or even ridicule the requirement to take display language 'for real':

**"If they're in Brazil, why don't they speak Portuguese?"**

P: [listening to the 'dialogue' on tape in Unit 3 which is set in Paraty, a city of historical and architectural interest in Brazil]: "**Se eles estão no Brasil, por que eles não falam Português?**" {If they're in Brazil, why don't they speak Portuguese?}  
 T: "Because this is not a Portuguese lesson". [C7B, 66:49-56]

T. elicits answers from the class and writes them on the board, one after the other:  
 T: "Where's Norma?"  
 P1: "At the post office:."  
 T: "What do you do at the post office?"  
 P1: "Play 'flipper'! {a type of video game, obviously not available at post offices}" [loud laughter]. [C7B, 66:34-9]

There were times when, after the usual negotiations, the interactional and the transactional engagements were partly reconciled in brief teacher-pupil exchanges:

T: "Now I want you to open your books on page 11."



PP. are restless and try to convince T - in Portuguese - to dismiss the class earlier than usual and allow them to go now.

T replies: "Why should I?"

M.C.: "Porque eu tenho que estudar geografia e não tenho tempo hoje a tarde porque eu tenho aula de inglês às 4:00." {Because I must study/revise Geography and I won't have any time because I've got this English lesson [at the private 'course'] at 4:00}.

(...) T goes round the class monitoring pairwork (...).

T (talking to E.S. and his 'partner'): "Oh? So you like her [some actress] because of her big tits? [laughs] That's what you want to say." E.S. repeats after her: "...she's got big tits, yes". [C7B, 57:39-end; 40:1-14]

## Authenticity and authentication

Worth recalling from their interviews was the pupils' willingness to suspend disbelief and try to put their English to real use outside the classroom (e.g.. to translate the lyrics of pop/rock songs; to use computers, to read movie, rock, sports, computer magazines, or even 'a whole book', to play 'imported' board games, most often RPG/Role-Play Games and video games). Such disposition, however, was not easily transferred to the classroom, where the so-called classroom games would pale against the real thing - not least because there is more room for adjustment of the rules when the game is 'for real':

A pupil (L.) comes to me when class is over and says he wants to show me something: "Aqui, são em inglês, de um jogo que quase todo mundo aqui joga" {Hey, they're in English, from a game most people are playing now} He shows me a pack of playing cards from a game called 'Advanced Dungeons and Dragons'. I try to show interest and some familiarity with the game. Four other boys join us now. "Você também joga?" {Do you play it too?}, one of them asks me. I tell them that (...) the other day I was trying to help [a nephew] with the directions in English, which I found very complicated. I want to know if they can read the accompanying manual and L. answers that two other friends are in charge of 'reading the rules' and passing them to the other players. They should know how to read the rules because they're ranked as 'masters' in the game, he says. Another boy adds: "Eles acabam inventando um pouco as regras em português..." {At the end of the day, they make up the rules a bit in Portuguese} [laughs]. [C7B, 41:4-19]

Also revealed in their interviews was their belief in English language learning as a means of ensuring membership in the first-world youth culture and future access into the exclusive international community of EFL users. Just as strong was their 'disbelief' in school English as 'real' language (learning), which may partly explain their reluctance to recognize the textbook and - to a certain extent - the teacher as



‘authentic’ interlocutors in the sense of providers of trustworthy information about ‘real life’ in the U.S. or in the English-speaking world ‘out there’. Neither did Elizabeth position herself as an ‘authentic’ interlocutor in that sense nor did she believe that foreign language teachers should attempt to be ‘transmitters’ of foreign cultures (cf. p. 146 above) or display any expertise in ‘the material and intellectual culture of foreign peoples’ (cf. Buttjes 1990:54). That may explain the fact that she would rarely encourage cross-cultural comments and that she practically made no use of foreign realia. The only occasion when she did bring any such cultural artifacts into class they were given away as tokens of the ‘been-abroad’ culture (cf. pp. 159-60 above) and their presentation preceded the lesson ‘proper’, i.e. when the shared interactional medium was still Portuguese:

T tells them about her trip to the U.S. [she had been away for a week to attend the American TESOL conference]. She says she has visited the Coca-Cola factory and the CNN headquarters [the reference to CNN does not seem to be acknowledged] (...).

T: "Você pode beber Coca-Cola quanto você quiser..." {You can have as much Coke as you can drink}.

P1: "Sem pagar?" {Free?}

T: "Você paga a entrada..." {You buy an entrance ticket...}

P2: "Dez dólares". {Ten dollars}

T: "Tem todos os anúncios da Coca-Cola do mundo inteiro... É interessante. (...) Tem banana com abacaxi, laranja..." {They show all the Coca-Cola ads there, from over the world... It's very interesting (...) There's banana and pineapple, orange [flavour]...}

P4: "Blarhh!" [And makes faces, as if sick]

(...)

T gives each pupil a small gift: NBA ('National Basketball Association') cards for the boys and chewing gum for the girls. There are complaints from two girls: "Ah, por que que é só pros meninos? Eu também coleciono!" {Why just for the boys? I 'collect' them too!}, and "Puxa, professora! Por que é que a senhora não tem prás meninas também?" {Come on, teacher, why don't you have enough for the girls too?}. As I am sitting beside Z., also known as 'The Grunge', I ask him if I can have a look at his card. It shows the picture of a basketball player at the front and at the back: *166/Greg Anthony G, New York Knicks, H:6'2", WT:19, College:Nevada Las Vegas, Draft: Knicks 1st Round 1991 (12th overall), Acquired: via draft, Born:11-15-67, Las Vegas, NV.* [C7A, 45:1-28].

Unlike the researcher, Elizabeth was aware of the symbolic value her young pupils attached to those imported (i.e. 'all in English') cultural artifacts and was thus making use of their motivating appeal. A few weeks later, I was given this useful



‘briefing’ about the NBA cards by one of their proud collectors:

Well, it’s an American card about the basketball league - the American basketball league - which comes with the statistics about that player, about the number of points he’s scored, the number of right passes per game, how many... the number of blockades... and there’s also this summary at the back about the player, how he’s managed to get in the team, how he...got a place there, his role in the team...

*Are they imported?*

Yes, it’s all in English.

*Uh-huh. Do you buy them here at newsstands?*

Er...there’s this teacher here at school, a teacher who sells them ‘cause he was in the States and he bought them there and where I live there’s a bookshop that sells them too. (...)

*Is there a way, that is, can you follow the games? Is it possible to follow the American basketball championship from Rio? Is it shown live on television or something like that?*

Well, Channel 7 shows some matches...North-American matches - some of them just, not all.

*What is the American basketball league called in English?*

NBA

*NBA stands for...*

It’s the National Basketball Association.

*And can you give me the names of two great American basketball players?*

Well, Magic Johnson and Michael Jordan. [C7A/12, 36: 20-end, 37:1-19]

But pupils’ reluctance to authenticate the background information in *New Wave* about American (youth) culture may also derive from the familiarity these urban middle-class youngsters seem to have with ‘things American’. As Elizabeth pointed out, "all that talk about television, Hollywood, the movies [in *New Wave*] is taken for granted (...); it no longer stands out as ‘different’ [T.E. 16:28-34]. As it happened, some pupils would question the veracity of the information presented in the text and, at the same time, display their credentials as members of the ‘been abroad’ crowd:

J.S. draws attention to the advert on page 11, reads it loud enough for the whole class to hear and shows surprise at the ‘low’ price of the tickets for a concert with ‘Tina Turner and Princess’, at \$4.50. She keeps repeating, ‘only four dollars and fifty cents?’ *Como é que pode?!... {How come?!}* (C7A, 60:32-37)

Or they would update the references about the American movie culture in the book (cf. NW, Activity 7, p. 11) so as to include ‘real’ living stars, and perhaps make use of ‘real’ language, which may or may not be the target language:

T asks them to work with their ‘peers’. J.S. shouts: "I don’t have a peer!" T joins her for a while and then walks round the class as usual.

(...)

J.S.: "Teacher, how do you say ‘gostoso’ in English?"



T: "Delicious".

J.S.: "Tom Cruise is delicious. 'Prince' é 'príncipe', não é? {'Prince' is/means 'a prince', isn't it?} ... Teacher, is it right? Tom Cruise is the prince of my dreams".

T nods.

J.S. (shouting to someone across the room): "Ju! Tom Cruise is the prince of my dreams and 'Cocktail' is my favourite movie".

Three girls near me are discussing American movie stars' looks, in Portuguese. Half of the class is standing and/or doing something other than discussing their 'likes and dislikes' in English. T is helping two girls who are still working and she seems to ignore the semi-chaos in the classroom. Bell rings! [C7A, 60:44-end]

Indeed, the observations showed that Class 7 pupils would mostly take the thin information in the textbook about the U.S., or about youth culture trivia for what it is, i.e. *not* as a real topic worth talking about but as EFL textbook reality - regardless of the teacher's occasional 'authentication':

T does Exercise 3 with them (...)

P: "L.A. is not very nice".

T asks her: "Do you know L.A.?"

P: "No"

T: "So why did you say it's not 'very nice'?"

S: "Chutei!" {Just a guess/an attempt [at an answer]}

T tells them she's been to L.A. and that "it's the place where famous movie stars live - in Hollywood..."; pupils seem unimpressed and make no comments/questions.

[C7B, 31:43-end; 32:1-10]

T goes round monitoring their work.

T: "How much are the tickets [for a rock concert somewhere in California]?"

P1: "Four dollars."

T: "Is that expensive?"

P2: "Yes."

T: "How much are the tickets here?"

No answer.

T: "They're not expensive here, are they?"

No answer. [C7B, 90:31-9]

Perhaps stemming from the fact that very little information was provided in the textbook which would encourage 'cross-cultural comparisons' of any significance, the rare comments on cross-cultural differences in the observed lessons were not textbook-generated. Yet, in tune with the 'quick-and-bitty' rhythm of *New Wave* (see p. 225), they were nothing but superficial one-liners about the been-abroad experience:

T: "What does Joe offer Noriko and Sophie?"

P3: "Um copo de café" {A glass of coffee}

T: "People there don't drink coffee in glasses..."

P4: "Que frescura!" {How fussy!}

P5: "Mas tem gente aqui que toma até em copinho de geléia..." {But here [in this country]

there are those who drink it even in jam jars...}

T:"OK, but it's still a 'cup of coffee', OK?" [C7B, 66:41-47]

P1:"O que que é 'offer'?" {What's 'offer'?"}

T:"Offer a cup of tea, offer a cup of coffee... In England they offer you a cup of tea, but in the States it's more common for people to offer you a cup of coffee..."

P1:"Como é que é? In England é tea, nos States é coffee? {What's that again? It's 'tea' in England and 'coffee' in the States?"}

P2:"Lá o café é horrível. O café deles é aguado."

T:"Yes, it's not real coffee. But if you want real coffee you have to ask for cappuccino...  
[C7A, 69:38-end, 70:1-3]

In sum, the *New Wave*/cocktail-party style of lesson content bears the hallmark of EFL trivia which has little to contribute to the cultural and educational dimensions of foreign language teaching. Impervious to authentication, it is at best recognized as 'just games' and not 'real content'. Or else, as one pupil at the end of the semester aptly summed up, the content of Class 7 lessons amounted to "those things about tenses and something about California" (cf. p. 179 above).

Let us now look at Class 11 where, in Elizabeth's view:

"(...) There is a better atmosphere (...) that allows for an exchange of ideas (...). Cultural ideas like 'They do this way and we do that way - in comparison. [Or] 'I wonder why they act the way they do'. That sort of thing" [T.E, 7:40-52].



## 8.2 Class 11 voices

Among the reasons suggested by Elizabeth for the ‘better atmosphere’ in this class was the fact that, as compared to their younger counterparts, these more mature, upper-intermediate pupils in Class 11 were better equipped to abide to the rules of the communicative game and ‘exchange ideas’ (with the teacher) in English. In fact, there were several - though brief - occasions in Class 11 when the interactional and the transactional engagements (cf. Widdowson 187, and section 8.1 above) converged and pupils would suspend disbelief and authenticate the teacher (and the topic):

T: "Now, let's correct exercise 5". ("Questions in the Present Perfect", HW Workbook, p. 13).

The question ‘Have you seen any good films recently?’ triggers off a brief conversation about cinema/films etc., in English most of the time. Some of the films mentioned were "Scent of a Woman", "Indecent Proposal", "Reservoir Dogs", and "Orlando".

P: "I saw four videos yesterday".

T: "What about books? Have you read any good books lately?" (silence)

P1/MS: (the one who gives most of the answers) "I'm reading *Fahrenheit* ..., it's very interesting. ... It's like 1984.

T: "Are you reading it in English?"

MS: "No, in Portuguese. A friend lent me the book two days ago and I started reading it on the bus on the way home; I'm really enjoying it". A. said something about the film being boring and they go on with the conversation in Portuguese. M.S. says he's borrowed Henry Miller's trilogy, Nexus, Sexus, Plexus - he's not sure of the order. This other pupil sitting in front of me - the one who's seen "Reservoir Dogs" - says she's reading "*Das Kapital*" in Spanish. A. turns round to her and says (in Portuguese): "How can you read a whole book in Spanish? I can't stand Spanish!"

[T stands and watches; then she resumes the transactional encounter]: "Let's correct Exercise 4 . [To A.] What about number 1?" [C11, 13:1-32]

There were other times when the transactional and the interactional engagements were reconciled for a while and English was the medium of a ‘real’ conversation around the topic of school/classroom rules, as in the extract below:

T:(...) "Ready?...All right, if you have any doubts just tell me and at the end of the lesson I'll". [She's interrupted by a pupil who comes in late carrying the Geography but not the English textbook.]

P: "Sorry, teacher but I have to study Geography".

T: "I know you must be worried about your test today. When is it? ... After this class? I won't keep you very long, I promise (...)".

Other pupils join in and they go on - always in English - talking about school exams in general, their forthcoming University entrance exam, the number of textbooks they're supposed to buy each year and carry to school everyday, and how hard third-year students have to work if they want to get a place at a good university. There are complaints about the tacit school agenda for Class 11:



P: "It's too much! We have to make a revision of seven years of school!"  
 (...)

T announces the next [fluency] activity ["Aim: to launch the theme of work and introduce some English proverbs ( HTB, p. 14)]: "Open your books on page (...)".  
 [C11, 18:1-24]

Not unlike what happened in Class 7, most of the lessons (12 out of 17) observed in Class 11 were textbook-centred; only in five lessons did 'the book' (and/or loose photocopied pages of selected exercises from the workbook) gave way to the teacher's 'own material'. This could take the form of a hand-out with vocabulary exercises adapted from other published material, or else of listening/speaking activities based on videotaped extracts from American television programmes (Hanna-Barbera cartoons and news/interviews). Besides, in one lesson towards the end of the semester, Elizabeth brought them copies of a past university entrance exam paper which they did without any difficulty.

Like their younger counterparts, Class 11 pupils were expected to abide to the 'no books, no lesson' rule though in their case such rule was made flexible enough to acknowledge their senior/pre-university status. As it happened, most pupils managed to flout the rule by sharing one textbook among two or three of them who would at times alternate their attendance; or else the textbook was replaced by loose photocopies which would bear little resemblance to the 'authentic' texts so carefully reproduced in *Headway* (cf. p. 215 above).

### **Re-accentuating the textbook**

As explained above (see 6.2 and 7.2), Class 7 and Class 11 were eventually selected for the long-term observation as much for their similarities as for the fact that they used different textbooks which were evaluated differently by the teacher, particularly as regards cultural content. According to Elizabeth, whereas *New Wave* is not designed to offer "any cultural information to the pupils (...) *Headway*, that is British, clearly



has this [information]" (T.E, 8:25-30). In spite of her professed lack of identification with the so-called 'British way' or with British materials such as *Headway* and of her unease with the question of culture teaching (see 6.1.4), Elizabeth added then that she intended to 'join with' the textbook in imparting such cultural information. As she felt the best thing to do with students at that level was to decide which activities to use on the basis of their response to the material presented the day before, she did not have any 'fixed plans' for Class 11. In fact, she intended to select those activities from *Headway* which would give this class of young adults something to talk about other than the language system itself. Yet, she reckoned she should also allocate at least one-third of the course time to "cover those grammatical points that are usual 'Vestibular' [university entrance] exam questions" [T.E, 22:48-52; 30:16-20].

In fact, when halfway through the semester she put her teaching programme down on paper - i.e. the list of topics to be covered by Class 11 during the school year - she came up with a list of items selected from the grammar and vocabulary sections of the contents page in *Headway* (see *Appendix C*) and disregarded the so-called 'discussion points' intended to launch the theme of the unit (cf. HTB p. ii, and p. 217 above).

It should be noted that all of Class 11 pupils were expected to sit for the so-called *Vestibular* exams (see p. 102) at the end of the year and their dual membership as upper-intermediate EFL learners at school and at the private 'course' gave them enough reason to believe they would soon be joining the exclusive community of university-educated Brazilians. By the same token, and in the absence of any specified objectives for their school English which would give it a distinctive educational dimension, pupils seemed to find their activity redundant, or at best they described



their lessons as 'revision exercises' from the textbook. As one pupil (cf. p. 176 above) put it, "We keep doing the textbook and if any facts come up we talk about them". By 'facts' he meant 'real content' such as 'a verb tense', 'a suffix here, a prefix there'; or else 'something about Shakespeare' - a reference to a lesson where Shakespeare's and Jeffrey Archer's biographies were presented side by side as a vehicle for 'controlled practice of the Present Perfect versus the Past Simple' (cf. HW, pp. 16-17; HTB, pp.10-11):

T: "Let's turn to page 16 first [Exercise 1. Work in pairs. Read the biography of William Shakespeare]. Two pupils argue about Shakespeare's birth date. T. helps: "Some people believe he didn't even exist. It's like Camões<sup>76</sup>, there's a lot of controversy...". [There are no further comments]

T: "Do you have any questions?"

P: "What's 'playwright'?"

T: "Who writes plays."

P: Why WRIGHT and not WRITER? T. ignores her question.

They go on doing Exercise 1, on page 16: "Ask and answer questions about Shakespeare. - When...?, - Where...? Did he...?" (...)

P: "How many plays has he written?"

T: "...did he write', because he's already dead.

P: "He's written 35 plays."

T: "...wrote'."

(...) Now they're doing Exercise 2, page 17: Read the biography of Jeffrey Archer.

*ARCHER, Jeffrey was born in 1940, and was educated at Wellington School and Oxford University. In 1969 he became a Member of Parliament when he won a by-election. At 29, he was the youngest member of the House of Commons. (...) He resigned from Parliament in 1974 because he had debts of over £427,000, following the collapse of a Canadian company in which he had invested. (...) After the success of his books, he decided to return to politics. From September 1985 to October 1986 he was Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party. He married his wife in 1966, and they live with their two children in Cambridge and London.*

P: "Is Jeffrey Archer real?"

Elizabeth addresses the question to me: "She may know for she's lived in England - that is, she still lives there in a way". I say I believe the information in the text is true and another pupil adds that *Kane and Abel* has been translated into Portuguese as *A Síndrome de Caim* and made into a 'movie' (...)

P: "What's 'House of Commons'?"

T: "The members of the House of Commons are not nobles [sic], they're common representatives, people like you and me."

P. seems satisfied with the answer and makes no further comments/questions.

(...)

P1: "When did he become a Member of Parliament?"

P2: In 1969.

P3: "When he was born?"

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<sup>76</sup>Reference to the Portuguese poet Luiz Vaz de Camões (1524-1580), author of the epic "*Os Lusíadas*" (Eng. *The Lusiad* or *Lusiads*), first published in 1572.



T: "...‘was he’..."

P4: In 1940.

P3: "When did he wrote his first novel?"

T: "...‘write’..." [C11, 4:1-end, 5:1-6]

That the ‘been-abroad’ affidavit should have been invoked to authenticate the textbook factual information about Jeffrey Archer is an indication that, though authorizing the textbook as a necessary source of information about language, Class 11 teacher and pupils alike did not expect it to give them any trustworthy information about the world or about foreign cultures, for that matter. In fact, the tacit teaching agenda for Class 11 was, as the pupil above rightly suggested, a revision of the grammatical ‘facts’ diluted in communicative dosages, as for example:

[They are doing a matching/gap-filling exercise] For item 10 [George Eastman -----],

T. helps with questions as follows:

T: "Remember Paul McCartney - one of The Beatles? Who is he married to?"

P: "Linda".

T: "Linda ...who?"

P: "Linda... McCartney?"

T: "No, Linda Eastman...from Eastman-Kodak - does it ring a bell?"

PP: "George Eastman...! Two of the students sitting in front start an argument over the answer to item q. They begin by using Portuguese and switch to English after T's admonition: "In English, please!"

When cleaning the board, T adds a ‘casual’ grammatical comment about the use of tenses in the exercise they have just done: "Notice that the Simple Past is used to refer to (...), while the Present Perfect (...)" [C11, 9:34-end, 10:1-7]

Elizabeth herself would at times spell out such tacit teaching agenda for her pupils. As she opened one of the few non-textbook-centred lessons, for example, she sounded both reluctant to admit to dealing with ‘explicit grammar’ in the course and apologetic for the ‘transgression’:

Teacher gets video equipment ready and introduces the material [a ‘Huckleberry Hound’ cartoon] as such: "This has nothing to do with what we’re doing. It’s difficult to find something with the Present Perfect!" [laughs]. [C11, 6:1-5]

At other times Elizabeth would waive her commitment to non-analytic, inductive learning and follow the *Headway* recommendations to encourage students to attend to "the essential rules of form and usage" (HTB, p. iv), and to make them



aware of the aims of the course and the way in which the textbook is organized (HTB, p. ii), e.g.:

T: "Ok, let's turn to page 26 for a little bit of grammar. This is a revision for you... If you have any doubts, take a look at page 111 where you have all the rules for 'Infinitives and Gerunds'" [C11, 25:34-7].

T: "Ok, I brought to you three sets of [unint] for you to...match together. So, I need three groups, I need you to form three groups and... One thing you need is a piece of paper to work on (...) And they're all related to ' -ing' or ' to-' ..., the uses of 'to-' or ' -ing'. [T continues instructions for the activity; noise of chairs being moved as pupils get ready to work in groups].

[T goes round helping them - in English - and they use English when interacting with T but switch to Portuguese when talking to each other - even when T is around].

T: "What is the common characteristic in the examples? [Writes examples on the board] Now, there's something in common in each group..."

P: [unint.]

T: "Verb, another verb and -ing. For example, verbs that need the ' -ing' afterwards, yeah, like STOP SMOKING, LOVE DOING, etc., FORGET MEETING and all that. What else?"

P1: "After prepositions".

T: "After prepositions. What else?... What else? [no answer] And if you have, for example, I LIKE TO SWIM and I LIKE SWIMMING... What's the difference?"

P2: "I like swimming is in general..."

T: "I like swimming is general. And I like to swim in [unint] water is..."

P2: "...more specific."

T: "...more specific. So, (...). So, remember, when I got your papers from the phobia poll [cf. HW, p.34] I noticed that many people didn't use the ' -ing' after the preposition, so...pay attention, all right? OK, thank you, this is\ That's all for today, right? At the end of your books, you have all the rules for the use of the ' -ing' and the infinitive, OK?" [C11, 28:25-59]

In her teaching agenda for that class there were also recognizable echoes of the 'three-pronged approach to vocabulary development' in *Headway* (cf. HTB, p. iv) which included exercises intended to develop awareness of the strategies for learning vocabulary. Such agenda would at times conflict with the overall non-analytic ethos of Class 11:

T asks pupils to work in pairs and do exercise 4, on page 13 ["Read the newspaper article. Try to guess the meaning of words in italics. Can you guess 50%?/90%?/100%?"]. Half of the class does not show much interest as I can overhear them chatting in Portuguese. T wants them to tell the class about their guessing process. (...)

T: "L., how did you get at the meaning of raised? [as in 'has raised £6,500 for the hospital']

L.: "Porque eu sei essa palavra, pô!" ('Cause I know this word, don't I?') [C11, 10:8-21]

## Authentication and authorization

As it happened, Elizabeth's attempts to follow what she perceived as the British



orientation of *Headway* and encourage ‘an exchange of ideas’ about ‘cultural’ matters had little resonance in that class, not least because, as one pupil remarked (see 6.2.2), learning about other peoples’ cultures in class is ‘kind of artificial’ and it is no substitute for the direct experience of a foreign country. Besides, as most pupils viewed the U.S. as the target country for such direct experience to take place and a few had already ‘been there’, unfamiliar references were brought into alignment with more familiar contexts, as illustrated below:

T introduces the listening activity [HW, pp. 14-15; HTB, p. 11] asking students if they have read any of Charles Dickens’ novels; they don’t seem to have heard of him - ever. When T. asks if they’ve heard of David Copperfield, a pupil says he knows David Copperfield, the American magician. T. smiles and tells them that "Charles Dickens is a very popular English writer, still today..." Then she reads out: "A TV company is about to start filming a new serial of Charles Dickens’ novel *David Copperfield*. They are trying to find an actor to take the part of Mr Micawber. Mr Micawber is a comic character. His plans always go wrong, he is always in debt, but he is always optimistic. He is a gentleman, about fifty, who talks too much because he likes the sound of his own voice. The producer and director have just auditioned three actors for the part. Listen to their discussion and fill in the chart opposite."

T. plays the tape through once; they complain about the poor quality of the sound and are allowed to look at the tapescript on page 126, while listening to the tape a second time.

During the brief discussion that follows, no questions are asked about Dickens or his characters or about any of the other references in the text to the British theatre scene (e.g. some actor who has "been with The Royal Shakespeare Company for years", or someone else who’s "been trying to break away from ... situation comedy roles for years, but producers won’t let him".) T. calls their attention to the phrase ‘situation comedy’ and suggests a certain similarity between American ‘sitcoms’ and some Brazilian TV programmes. The comparison is not extended to the British scene.

Next, T. asks them to do exercise 3, page 14 (*Language focus*, for the distinction between the *Present Perfect Simple* and the *Present Perfect Continuous*). T. goes round the class, checking their work and offering help, as usual. [C11, 11:1-34]

On the whole, references to ‘real’ people (e.g. British celebrities such as actor Richard Harris and Sir Andrew Lloyd-Webber as found in the newspaper article reproduced on page 13 [*Standard*, 3 March 1980]) as well as the other factual information (e.g. about the job market/work in Britain) presented through ‘authentic’ texts went largely unnoticed and would thus remain *unauthenticated*. Moreover, as illustrated below, the potential cultural load of the vocabulary development exercises in *Headway* failed to be actualized; also in this lesson the odd request for more



information about life 'in England' came from the teacher herself and was addressed to me:

They are doing pairwork or rather sitting close enough to be able to share a book [but for 4 pupils who haven't got one and were allowed to attend the lesson]; T goes round monitoring their work ("Vocabulary 1: Here is a list of words and expressions connected with work. Use your dictionary and divide them into the following categories (...)", HW p. 20):

T: "So, check if you see, check if you can put these words here, if you can put these words under these categories, Ok? So, I'll give you five minutes to try to do this."

P: "O quê que é 'on the dole'?" [What's...?]

T: "On the dole? Not working. In Portuguese we say 'on the dole' ...er... 'encostado', 'estou encostado', 'no INPS'."

P: "What's 'wages'?"

T: "Wage?[sic] It's a certain amount of money you receive for your work - not exactly a salary, but a certain amount...". [Pupils nod and writes something on her book] (...)

T is checking their answers. At the phrase 'to earn a £10,000 p.a.', Elizabeth turns to me: "Is that a high salary in England, S.?"

I: "Not really..., not by British standards, I reckon."

She replies with a smile: "I get much less than that" [laughs]. [C11, 25:1-32]

In the last week in the semester, Elizabeth and I had a 'de-briefing' meeting aimed at bringing together different stages of her perspective on the research. We noticed how she had reviewed her notion of culture throughout the semester, and as she herself admitted, as a result of her participation in the research. She said she used to find 'this business of culture a bit embarrassing' and had tried to sweep it under the carpet; now she was more aware of the 'culture load' of some of her lessons, particularly in Class 11, 'with *Headway*'. When I asked whether she felt she had really 'joined with' the textbook in what she viewed as its cultural/British orientation she replied that she had selected the most interesting 'activities', the ones she thought could give her 'sophisticated' pupils 'something to talk about'. When probed further, however, she could only recall 'that thing on proverbs, [and] that job quiz ...'.

The semester was over, so was fieldwork. It was time for me to recollect those voices 'in tranquillity', and then bring them back to life when writing up this ethnographic account. That has been done in detail. It is now time to look back on the



dialogic route taken so far and try to assess its potential 'to awaken new and independent words' and thus reveal 'new ways to mean' (cf. Bakhtin 1981:345-6).

## Chapter 9

### In Conclusion

#### 9.1 A retrospective view

Throughout this thesis I have been seeking to problematize the issue of culture in FL education, a task which has become all the more necessary at a time when the revival of interest in culture teaching has provoked more curiosity and embarrassment than it has been the object of critical attention. In particular, this thesis has focused on day-to-day EFL classroom practice in a Brazilian school to find out what teacher and learners make of the assumption that culture is an integral part of the EFL syllabus. A Bakhtinian-inspired, dialogic perspective on language education and an ethnographic approach to research in educational settings provided the basic theoretical and methodological tools for the investigation.

I began by conceptualizing syllabus content - cultural or other - as multivoiced discourse which is filled not only with the voices of members of the immediate classroom culture, i.e. teacher, pupils, and textbook, but also with voices coming from the local educational and EFL cultures. In tune with the dialogic perspective taken, no attempt was made to start from a well-rounded definition of 'culture' or 'cultural content' and then proceed to investigate the amount of fit between that and classroom practice. Instead, other theoretical voices were incorporated to the study along the way so as to work towards an understanding of the concept which should be attentive to the complexity and overlap of meanings of the word in the social sciences and in the language teaching profession.

An overview of the intricate historical development of the concept of culture



as provided by Williams (1967, 1976) has helped to uncover some of the sources of the hostility and embarrassment still provoked by the word "culture" in some quarters. As recalled from Williams's account, the main area of hostility has been connected with the uses of the word involving claims to superior knowledge and refinement, and distinctions between 'high' art (culture) and popular art and entertainment. Another area of hostility to the word culture springs from its association with anti-German feelings, during and after the first world war, and the use of *Kultur* as propaganda. Moreover, culture has had a long and difficult relation with 'civilization', itself a problematic term. Indeed, as Williams points out (1977:13) in the late eighteenth century, under the influence of the 'new historical rationality of the Enlightenment', the two terms became in effect undistinguishable and were used in English, French, and German to refer to a process of development from barbarism which culminated in an achieved state of refinement and order, i.e. the metropolitan civilization of England and France. A reaction to this enlightened view of civilization, from Rousseau on through the Romantic movement, provided the basis of an alternative sense of culture as a general process of 'inner' development, soon extended to include 'the arts', religion, and the institutions and practices of meanings and values" (Williams 1977:14-15).

The word culture then underwent another change; the plural 'cultures' was introduced and became especially important in the nineteenth-century development of comparative anthropology, where it has continued to designate a distinctive 'way of life'. In anthropology (and sociology), early 'mentalistic' theories and '-emic' approaches to culture as shared knowledge were opposed to 'materialist' or '-etic' approaches which regarded culture as sets of observable behaviour and/or systems of

adaptation within the social structure. Fundamental questions about the formative or determining elements which produce these distinctive cultures then gave rise to a variety of answers both within and outside anthropology. Williams (1981:13) distinguishes two kinds of positions in this wide range of answers, also classified as *idealist* and *materialist*. The first places emphasis on the 'informing spirit' of a whole way of life, which is most evident in 'specifically cultural' activities - a language, styles of art, kinds of intellectual work; the second focuses on a 'whole social order' within which a specifiable culture is seen as the direct or indirect product of an order primarily constituted by other social activities.

Williams (1981:13) sees a 'contemporary convergence' of the two positions above as well as between the anthropological and sociological senses of culture as a distinct 'whole way of life' and the more specialized if also more common sense of culture as 'artistic and intellectual activities'. These are now much more broadly defined and include not only all the traditional arts and forms of intellectual production but also all the signifying practices - from language through the arts and philosophy to journalism, fashion and advertising. Such 'contemporary convergence' is expressed in the way culture has been conceptualized in the field known as 'cultural studies', particularly by its proponents at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS).

As Agger (1992) points out in his appraisal of the contribution of the CCCS group to cultural studies, their perspective on culture moved beyond an opposition to a moral or literary concept of culture as a body of received wisdom - characteristic of Leavis' Scrutiny in mainstream literary criticism - to a view of culture as both experience of the world and practice within it, as in anthropology and sociology.



However, as the CCCS group borrowed from this anthropological broadening of culture, they were all very critical of its lack of specificity. As Agger rightly notes, by identifying culture everywhere, sociologists tend to lose the specificity of the concept of culture that stresses its interinstitutional nature as well as its active side - the possibilities of making new cultures from the ground up. (Ibid. p. 88)

Besides responding to mainstream anthropology and sociology, the Birmingham approach to culture as practice and experience responds to orthodox Marxism, particularly around the classical Marxist question of 'base' and 'superstructure'. In fact, the tension between contending perspectives on the connections between culture, ideology and social process has given rise to distinct strands in Cultural Studies, identified by Hall (1981) as *culturalism* and *structuralism*. The first conceptualizes culture as "interwoven with all social practices; and those practices, in turn, as the activity through which men and women make history" (Hall 1981:26). In the second, the concept of culture gives way to articulations around the concept of 'ideology' which, in Althusser's (1969:223) translation of Lévi-Strauss's (1963, 1966) conceptual framework, was formulated as "a system of 'representations', but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with 'consciousness'". As Hall (1981:30) points out, many of the other lines of divergence between the culturalist and the structuralist paradigms "flow from this point: the conception of 'men' as bearers of the structures that speak and place them, rather than as active agents in the making of their own history".

It was largely Antonio Gramsci's (1971) work, and his concept of 'hegemony' in particular, which provided Cultural Studies with the conceptual means to restore the dialectic between 'consciousness' and 'conditions', and to think forwards from the best

elements in structuralism and culturalism. Not "a static hegemony, of the kind which is indicated by abstract totalizing definitions of a dominant 'ideology' or 'world-view'" but 'a lived hegemony' which "does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own. (Williams 1977:113).

A perspective on culture enlightened by the concept of hegemony contends that culture "is not an undifferentiated system that serves to integrate society (...) but instead is a region of serious contest and conflict over meaning. For this reason, cultural studies proponents do not talk about a single culture but rather about many, often cross-cutting cultures (...) - cultures of class, race, gender and nation, amongst others" (Agger 1992:9).

The 'cultural studies' (re)-formulations of the concept of culture were found to be particularly congenial with my own as well as with the dialogic perspective on language education in this thesis. However, since such dialogic perspective should be sensitive to the multiple, often conflicting, meanings at work in the classroom no claims were made that such formulations should reflect the prevalent views in mainstream foreign language teaching or that these, in turn, should find resonance in the foreign language classrooms under observation. Hence, in order to get a better understanding of current classroom meanings of 'culture' I then proceeded to examine the various definitions and uses of the word in the language teaching profession over time, against the backdrop of the development of the concept in the social sciences, as summarized next.

Again, an historical perspective was taken to trace the development of the



notion of culture from Jespersen's (1904, cited in Rivers 1968:314) statement that "the highest purpose in the teaching of foreign languages may be (...) the access to the best thoughts and institutions of a foreign nation [or] the spirit of the nation (...)", through the Reform Movement and its emphasis on knowledge of 'the foreign social reality' (Buttjes 1990:54), and on to the history of '*Kulturkunde*', one which, as Stern (1983:247) rightly points out, can "serve both as a lesson and a warning when we consider present-day attempts to teach culture". We thus saw how '*Kulturkunde*' developed from its 'promising' meaning as the 'history of ideas of another country' to the extreme, ethnocentric view of the concept 'in the spirit of the Hitler era'. When applied to foreign language teaching "it was treated as a foil against which to develop a better appreciation of German culture". Thus, the search for the 'underlying structure' or the 'mind of a nation' ('*Geist*' or '*Seele*') was soon to become "an invitation to blatant forms of prejudice and stereotyping about the 'French *esprit*' or 'English realism'" (ibid. 247-8). The legacy of '*Kulturkunde*' is also believed to be the driving force behind present-day attempts to make language teaching value-free or 'culturally neutral', as for example by making it subordinate to 'communicative' efficiency. The experience of the failure of '*Kulturkunde*', together with the emerging intellectual climates of the Cold War and of New Criticism, may also have "led many foreign language practitioners to retreat from the realities of political and social life into the realm of high literature and those human values that were said to transcend times and cultures" (Buttjes 1991b:55).

It was not long before language teaching, particularly in the U.S., began to acknowledge the impact of anthropology and its broad concept of culture. In the 50s and 60s, writings of theorists like Brooks (1960/1964) - who championed the cause

of culture in language teaching - promoted the broad 'anthropological' sense of culture, or the 'way-of-life culture', as the 'technical', 'scientific' sense, often distinguished from culture as 'refinement' and 'artistic endeavours'. In tune with the ethnographic or '*-emic*' (cf. Pike 1967:8-18) spirit of the time, Brooks (ibid. p. 88) argues that, for pedagogical purposes, culture should be presented as "the view of life as seen from within the new speech community". Language teaching writings in America and Europe were soon to incorporate the distinction between culture with a small 'c' and culture with a capital 'C', the first allowing more easily for cross-cultural comparisons in the language class, which should then lead to intercultural understanding. Those who advocated culture in language teaching were soon faced with the task of translating the ill-defined, expanded concept of culture - or rather, the combined Culture-culture(s) version which prevailed in language teaching writings at the time - into operational chunks for classroom use. The various - and not surprisingly, unsuccessful - attempts to find a framework for analysis and presentation of a foreign culture in language learning can be rightly regarded as part of the wider search "for a common universal point of contact between cultures (...), that can transform cultural barriers into cultural bridges", as Kramsch (1993:223-4) puts it.

I also considered the relativist assumptions underlying claims that 'bridging cultural gaps' (cf. Valdes 1986) is a necessary outcome of foreign language learning and noted that the Whorfian hypothesis - particularly in its strong version of linguistic determinism - is treated with caution in the literature, even by those writers who strongly advocated the teaching of culture in the 1960s and 1970s.

It has been pointed out that 'the old argument over the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis should be given a decent funeral' so that attention could be turned to the questions the



Whorfian hypothesis addressed and that have yet to be answered (Damen 1986:129). After writing this thesis I would add that the polarization between universalist and relativist positions on the language-culture interface has only blurred the real issue. It seems to me that the question is not whether language and culture *can* or even if they *should* be pedagogically dissociated. What has been backgrounded in the culture teaching literature is exactly what has long been at the centre of the debate in cultural studies (or its 'neo-Marxist' version) and what makes culture such a sensitive issue (and cultural studies so controversial). And that is "the question of how much of the other's meaning I will permit to get through when I surround [the others'] words with my own, it is a question about the governance of meaning, about who presides over it, and about how much of it is shared" (Clark and Holquist 1984:236). An understanding of such question would enable language teaching practitioners to 'selectively assimilate the words of others' in the discipline as regards, for example, the definition of syllabus content. It would also, I believe, help to rid the incipient debate in ESOL on the culture-language-ideology interface of the reductionism and proselytism which are in my view important sources of the present discomfort caused by culture in some professional quarters.

The debate in ESOL is a belated development of the revival of interest among language teachers and researchers in the cultural content and political purposes of language teaching. Particularly challenged by those who take an openly political stance towards language education (as for example, Auerbach 1986, Auerbach and Burgess 1985, Pennycook 1989, Peirce 1989, Benesch 1983) is the notion that some kinds of teaching are safely apolitical while others are dangerously ideological. A related controversial area in this debate has to do with the alleged neutrality of ESP teaching

and some (other) forms of communicative EFL teaching, a neutrality guaranteed by the 'acultural' nature of English as an international lingua franca and/or by its universal functional value. Whereas some argue that "at the international level (...) English is essentially acultural [as] it is the medium for subcultures which cut across national and political boundaries" (Bowers 1992:30), others - as Byram (1989:59), for example - would rather refer to "the special nature of English as the dominant language of international communication as a result of large-scale colonisation, past and present". Regrettably, the debate in ESOL is often impaired by a view of culture as a monolithic and homogeneous entity in an isomorphic relationship with other monolithic entities such as nation, or language (e.g. Alpetkin and Alpetkin 1984); it also reveals some problematic interpretations of the workings of dominance and resistance in educational settings - interpretations which stop short of reading off from discourse a totalizing 'ideology' or 'world-view' (e.g. Dendrinos 1992).

I also reviewed Byram's (1989) and Kramsch's (1993) contributions which are concerned both with the culture-language interface and the political and educational dimensions of the teaching activity. Byram's 'four-dimensional model' can be said to be the most consistent contribution to date to the development of a theoretical base for the teaching of culture in foreign language education, particularly in the context of FL teaching in secondary schools in EEC countries, where particular socioeconomic and geopolitical characteristics seem to allow for its operationalization. Different from Byram - who believes that a principled approach to cultural studies may provide practitioners and policy makers with the means to operationalize the common assumption that language learning "may raise understanding of and reduce prejudice towards other cultures and peoples" (ibid. p. 51) - Kramsch (1993:236) takes a



‘philosophy of conflict’ as a point of departure to argue that it is the role of cross-cultural education to add a further perspective onto this multifaceted reality (called culture) and enable learners to define for themselves a ‘third place’ in the interstices between the cultures they grew up with and the new cultures they being introduced to.

Kramsch’s approach to the question of culture in the language classroom is undoubtedly the most congenial to the perspectives on culture and language pedagogy taken in this thesis. However, whereas Kramsch refers to classroom occurrences as a means of illustrating her definitions and showing the potential and limitations of current practices, I took an ethnographic route and examined classroom practice throughout a whole school semester in the hope to discover the meanings ‘culture’ might take on along this process.

Methodological procedures were taken from the outset for the operationalization of the notion of ‘multivoiced’ syllabus which encapsulates both the view of the classroom as a complex of heterogeneous, overlapping cultures as well as the view of content (cultural or other) as resulting from the ‘dialogic’ nature of classroom discourse. Thus conceived, the language syllabus resonates not only with the voices of members of the immediate classroom culture, i.e. teacher, pupils, and textbook, but also with the voices of those who have a more or less influential role to play in the local educational and EFL cultures.

The first necessary step was to provide an overview of the educational context in Brazil so as to begin to bring background voices of the local educational culture to the fore. A consideration of the place of FLs in the official curriculum revealed that regardless of faint recommendations ‘on paper’ as to the democratic provision of

foreign language education in the country, EFL instruction is *de facto* in the hands of private language institutes (or 'English courses'), being thus further removed from the context of truly democratic general education. When it comes to learning English - and regardless of its compulsory status in the school curriculum - *Ipanema* pupils do the same as most middle-class pupils in Rio de Janeiro and go to a private language school (or 'English course') in search of 'the real thing'. This dual membership and, more importantly, the lack of any specified objectives for school English which would give it a distinctive educational dimension, may help to explain the pervading sense of irrelevance in the classes observed.

The analysis of documentary data was then undertaken to find out what the official voices in Brazilian curricular documents might be saying about culture in language teaching. A more differentiated perspective on culture was added to the framework provided by Clark's study of the way in which three broad value systems - originally posited by Skilbeck (1982) as *classical humanism*, *reconstructionism*, and *progressivism* - permeate the contemporary educational process and are reflected in the foreign language curriculum. Such perspective allowed us to recognize the Enlightenment's view of culture in the 'cultural bias' of classical humanism - a view which surfaces again in reconstructionism, in the guise of the 'pursuit of perfectibility' and in stark contrast with the Romantic view of culture (as a general process of 'inner development') which, in turn, characterizes progressivism.

In the Brazilian documents, two strands were identified as to the way they voice the question of language and culture in the curriculum. The first, which I called the '*language-as-communication*' strand for its emphasis on the role of language as a tool of communication 'par excellence', is identifiably progressivist in its general



claims; in the second, called the '*language-as-culture*' strand for its emphasis on the role of language as 'expression of a [national] culture', there are recognizable echoes of classical humanism. At times, the 'single-voiced' conception of culture-language-nation takes over in those documents to invest L1 teaching with the missionary role of encouraging positive identification with national identity/culture/values, that is, to what eventually amounts to 'the Brazilian Culture'. Though displaying a certain concern with the eventual role the diversity of national languages and cultures may play in general language education, these documents do not in any way see foreign language teaching as a means to promote 'a sense of world citizenship' which, in Skilbeck's (1986:5) words, is "the next step beyond identification with the nation state". Indeed, the underlying view of culture in most of them has clearly-defined national contours.

In the document containing the rationale and statement of objectives for foreign language teaching (English and French) at *Ipanema School* echoes of progressivism are most often mixed with a faint reconstructionist concern with the social nature of language use. In line with the overall progressivist ethos of the document is an underlying belief in some of the principles of the 'communicative approach'. These include a view of language as 'communication', an emphasis on 'real' language use, and a concern with the learner, the learning process and the learning environment. But the progressivist concerns with individual growth in diversity are somewhat at odds with the attempt to smooth differences inside EFL classes (resulting from pupils' diverse participation in the 'been-abroad culture' or in the 'English course') by recourse to a 'levelling' scheme which is emblematic of the two-tier educational system in the country.

As for 'culture' in the *Ipanema* document, it is taken broadly as 'real [way of] life' and 'civilization', echoing the distinction between culture with a small 'c' and culture with a big 'C', incorporated in the writings of language teachers theorists in the fifties and sixties, and which was to surface again in the interview material. Culture/culture has a supporting role in the syllabus as it is seen as a motivating factor, particularly if presented with 'realism', a first hint of the 'concern with reality' manifested throughout the interview and observational data.

Also hinted in the *Ipanema* document and confirmed by the observations is the 'real communication fallacy', i.e. the failure to recognize the distinctive nature of communication in actual situations of language use in the world 'out there' and within classroom boundaries. The inability to make pedagogic provision for the lack of fit between the two 'realities' resulted, particularly in Class 7, in the reduction of syllabus content to a series of oral 'communicative activities' which, though interpersonal, lacked any 'authenticity' or substantial content, for that matter.

The Culture/culture distinction was found to underlie the teachers' views and the first was favoured as the ideal, but not actual, 'cultural' content. On the whole, Ipanema teachers and pupils alike did not view culture as an integral part of their EFL syllabus. Though conceding there may be something *about Culture* (e.g. 'about Shakespeare') or else *about culture* (e.g. 'California', 'that thing on proverbs') in their lessons, they believe it to be something to be 'experienced' and/or learned 'in loco', in the foreign country itself. So is 'real' language, for that matter. In fact, the value attached to the experiential learning of a foreign language is a recurring topic throughout the data and one of the manifestations of what was here termed the 'concern with reality'.



In the teachers' interview material such concern was also found to be underlying various statements of faith in the direct experience abroad (or 'out there') as a necessary condition for oral proficiency and professional expertise. For most teachers, that expertise should also include familiarity with the foreign 'way-of-life culture', 'curiosities' and 'peculiarities' which might interest pupils, or else with a certain 'general knowledge' about the world 'out there'. But even if the teachers did not feel they should be cast in the role of surrogate native informants about culture there was a recognizable sense of inadequacy among those who did not have the valued experience abroad.

In Class 7 and Class 11 Elizabeth shared with most of her pupils the prestigious membership in the 'been-abroad' community and she was most at ease with her role as a foreign *language* teacher. She was suspicious, however, of all the stereotyping, proselytism and national chauvinism that so often goes under the name of culture teaching. Among the reasons for Elizabeth's unease with the question of culture is her own experience as a young English language learner abroad and at a 'culture-bound' language school in the country. But underlying Elizabeth's reservations is also the tension between her view of culture, or rather *Culture*, as 'an élitist matter' and her progressivist beliefs which include a commitment to pupil-centred inductive learning and a profound dislike of anything that could imply teacher control. Hence, though conceding she might be dealing with culture covertly in her EFL lessons, she was adamant about not teaching culture - or anything else - overtly. Allured by Krashen and Terrell's (1983) version of progressivism in foreign language education, Elizabeth surrendered teaching to the pursuit of an ideal (i.e. 'natural') learning situation which does little for the provision of pupils' educational needs. The

observations in Class 7 showed how the Krashenite discourse embodied in the textbook adopted was at best recognized as 'just games' and not 'real content' by the pupils - and to a certain extent, by the teacher herself. 'By its very nature incapable of being double-voiced' (cf. Bakhtin 1981:344), the *New Wave* trivia thus failed to be authenticated as relevant content by the pupils. As it happened, the textbook and, by extension, the subject ('school English') and the teacher herself were nearly divested of their institutional authority.

Not unlike what happened in Class 7, Class 11 lessons were mostly centred on the textbook. Though distinct from *New Wave* in several respects, not least in the way it reaccentuates the communicative voices, *Headway* proved to be no more 'persuasive from within' (cf. Bakhtin 1981:242) in actual conditions of classroom use. At odds with the prevailing belief among pupils in the irreplaceable role of direct experience for language and culture learning, out of tune with the surrounding non-analytical voices, barely recognized as a source of exam questions or 'revision exercises', defaced in its 'authenticity' by the local photocopying culture, *Headway* was cast in a minor supporting role in Class 11. As a result, the potential cultural - or other - content of Class 11 EFL syllabus remained unauthenticated and unauthorized as educational discourse by the classroom culture.

## 9.2 A prospective view

When we set out on this ethnographic journey we hoped to be able to turn *culture in EFL education* into a question to which a theoretical answer could be given. Thus, the thrust of the research project was not the search for well-rounded answers or alternative solutions to the teaching/learning of culture in language classes. Indeed, the



relevance of this thesis derives exactly from the fact that too many hasty answers have been given to a question which in my view has yet to be properly formulated.

As it happened, the ethnographic route in this research has taken us somewhere along the road between a wide-angled, though thorough, description and an embryonic theoretical formulation which has raised more questions than tried to answer them. Hence, the account in this thesis is offered as one, tentative way of approaching the question of culture in EFL lessons by trying to capture, and make sense of, some of the diverse and simultaneous voices which populate those Brazilian classrooms. These voices have told us little to reinforce the assumption that culture is "taught and learnt, both overtly and implicitly, both consciously and incidentally" in the language class (cf. Byram 1989:37); they might have given us clues into the reasons for the word culture to be still able to provoke as much embarrassment and hostility as genuine interest and near-devotion among practitioners. But these voices have certainly told us of the need to rescue foreign language teaching, and ESOL in particular, from the cultural blandness and monological trivia which passes for 'communicative' content so that the discipline can recover its multivoicedness, i.e. its truly educational dimension.

By taking a dialogic perspective to examine (single-handedly) the wider context of FL instruction I may have been guilty of simply 'scratching the surface' (cf. Stubbs 1986) of complex phenomena and/or neglecting important voices (e.g. 'voices of the mind', Wertsch 1991) which were bound to add a distinctive dimension to the discussion. Nevertheless, by bringing traditionally muffled voices to the fore, this thesis has certainly raised questions of relevance to language planners, syllabus designers, textbook writers and, ultimately, to FL practitioners.

Finally, by providing an analytical account of the details and routines of current practice which contains features and issues which may be common to a range of different concrete settings in Brazil and elsewhere, this study may awaken ‘new and independent words’ and thus be validated - not through consensus but through multivoiced dialogue. In so doing, we hope to further the search not only for *new* but for *principled* ‘ways to mean’ in ESOL academic discourse.



APPENDIX A

Class 7 interview schedule

(The interview was based on pupils' answers to the folllowing questionnaire)

Q u e s t i o n n a i r e

(12/04/1993)

Name: ----- Age: -----

1. Did you first begin English

a) at school?-----

b) at a private course? -----

(Please give name of school/course)

2. Do you (still) do English outside school/at any private course? -----

3. Have you ever been to any English-speaking country?-----

4. Have you ever lived in any English-speaking country?-----

5. Have you got any English-speaking friend or relative? -----

6. Do you sometimes use English outside the classroom? -----

7. Do you think you will need English in the future? -----

8. What would be the subject matter/content of an ideal English course for you?

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-----

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Thank you very much indeed!

APPENDIX A

Class 11 interview schedule

(The interview was based on pupils’ answers to the follloing questionnaire)

Q u e s t i o n n a i r e

(12/04/1993)

Name: ----- Age: -----

1. Did you first begin English

a) at school?-----

b) at a private course? -----

(Please give name of school/course)

2. Do you (still) do English outside school/at any private course? -----

3. Have you ever been to any English-speaking country?-----

4. Have you ever lived in any English-speaking country?-----

5. Have you got any English-speaking friend or relative? -----

6. Do you sometimes use English outside the classroom? -----

7. Do you think you will need English in the future? -----

8. How would you sum up the content of the English language programme of Class  
11 so far? -----

9. It is often said that foreign language learning is culture learning. Do you agree?  
(Please justify your answer) -----

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-----

Thank you very much



## APPENDIX B

**Transcript and other graphic conventions:**

T	Teacher
P	Unidentified pupil
P1, P2, etc.	Identified pupil
PP	Several pupils simultaneously
Shadow type	Speech in Portuguese
{ }	English translation of speech in Portuguese
SMALL CAPITALS	Text on the blackboard
[ ]	Researcher's comment about the transcript and other contextual clues e.g. [unint], for 'unintelligible'; [laughs]; [abruptly], etc.
...	Pause within a speaker's turn
(...)	Omitted discourse which is irrelevant to the issue being discussed
<i>Italic type</i>	Researcher's questions
<b>Bold type</b>	Words/phrases in English in the original
<u>Underline type</u>	Emphatic speech
=	Placed at the end of one's speaker's turn and at the beginning of the next speaker's adjacent turn to indicate brief overlapping
\	a) If inserted within a speaker's turn, it indicates an abrupt change of course in the topic orientation; b) if placed at the end of a speaker's turn, it indicates interruption by the next speaker.

## Teacher's Specification of Syllabus Content

Class 7

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0.

Introductions

Descriptions of people and places

Information questions with What, Where and When

Present tense of BE and other verbs

Have/Has vs. There is/ There are

1.

Introductions at a party

Occupations

Sentence negation

Simple present tense (you, I)

Information questions and Yes/No questions

Demonstratives: this/that

Adverbs of frequency

Pronunciation: syllable emphasis (sentence stress)

Reading: Reading signs

2.

Ability to do things

Favorite kinds of movies, books, music, sports

Questions and answers with can/can't

Modal auxiliary can/can't to express ability

Pro: "uh" and /æ/ Reading: How healthy is your life-style?

3.

Occupations

Descriptive adjectives for people

Questions and answers with do/does

Prepositions: in, on, at

Pro: 3rd person singular /s,z,Iz/

Reading: Tell your fortune the Chinese way

4.

Description of people

Object pronouns

Information questions with do/does

Pro: intonation of questions and answers

Reading: California from A to Z

5.

Description of someone's personal history

Time expressions

Routine activities

Questions and answers with simple past was/were and several irregular verbs

Pro: Linking final consonants and following vowel: /ay hae vIt/; /æ/ and /a/

Reading: Who's "The boss"?

6.

Weekend and free time activities

Yes/No short answers with do/don't, does/doesn't, did/didn't, can/can't

Simple past: more irregular verbs

Pro: intonation of questions and answers

Reading: Greetings from Buenos Aires

7.



Parts of the body

Subject questions: What. Where. Who. How

Simple past tense: regular verbs, -ed pronounced /t/ or /d/

Information questions when the question word is the subject: What happened?

Pro: /t/ or /d/

Reading: Who did it?

8.

Interviews and educational experience

Occupation and work experience

Possessive pronouns

Simple past tense: regular verbs, -ed pronounced as an extra syllable /Id/

Information questions with Whose

Pro: /t/, /d/, and /Id/ endings

Reading: What do you remember about 1986?

9.

Present time activities

Description of weather

Present continuous tense

It as subject in weather expressions

Adjectives to describe weather

Pro: -ing linked to verb by consonant; /e/ and /ey/

Reading: What's the weather like where you live?

10.

Plans and intentions

Invitations

Present continuous tense to express future plans and intentions

Present continuous vs. simple present

Time expressions

Pro: "yuh" and "duh" in unstressed syllables; "uh" and "ah"

Reading: Is Tokyo anything like Los Angeles?

11.

Description and comparison of two cities

Vacation plans

Comparison of adjectives

Adjectives to describe places

Pro: linking final consonant and y

Reading: How different are you from your parents?

12.

Personal problems

Offers of advice

Opinions of people

too and enough

Modal auxiliary should

Adjectives to describe people

Pro: /s/, /z/ and /c/; /ey/, /e/, /ae/, /a/, and "uh"

Reading: Five years later

**Vocabulary**

Occupations

Descriptive adjectives for people

Time expressions

Injuries and accidents

Parts of the body

Adjectives to describe weather

Time expressions

Adjectives to describe places

too and enough

Adjectives to describe people

**Pronunciation**

Syllable emphasis (sentence stress)

Ability to do things

"uh" and /æ/

3rd person singular /s, z, Iz/

Intonation of questions and answers

Linking final consonants and following vowel: /ay hae vIt/; /æ/ and /a/

Intonation of questions and answers

/t/ or /d/

/t/, /d/, and /Id/ endings

-ing linked to verb by consonant; /e/ and /ey/

"yuh" and "duh" in unstressed syllables: "uh" and "ah"

Linking final consonant and y

/s/, /z/ and /c/; /ey/, /e/, /æ/, /a/ and "uh"

**Readings**

Reading signs

How healthy is your life-style?

Tell your fortune the Chinese way

California from A to Z

Who's "The boss"?

Greetings from Buenos Aires

Who did it?

What do you remember about 1986?

What's the weather like where you live?

Is Tokyo anything like Los Angeles?

How different are you from your parents?

Five years later



## Grammar

Information questions with What, Where and When

Present tense of BE and other verbs

Have/Has vs. There is/There are

Questions and answers with can/can't

Modal auxiliary can/can't to express ability

Questions and answers with do/does

Prepositions: in, on, at

Object pronouns

Information questions with do/does

Questions and answers with simple past was/were and several irregular verbs

Yes/No short answers with do/don't, does/doesn't, did/didn't, can/can't

Simple past: more irregular verbs

Subject questions: What, Where, Who, How

Simple past tense: regular verbs, -ed pronounced /t/ or /d/

Information questions when the question word is the subject: What happened?

Possessive pronouns

Simple past tense: regular verbs, -ed pronounced as an extra syllable /Id/

Information questions with Whose

Present continuous tense

It as subject in weather expressions

Present continuous tense to express future plans and intentions

Present continuous vs. simple present

Comparison of adjectives

Modal auxiliary should

## Functions

Introductions

Descriptions of people and places

Introductions at a party

Ability to do things

Description of someone's personal history

Description of weather

Present time activities

Weekend and free time activities

Interviews and educational experience

Occupations and work experience

Favorite kinds of movies, books, music, sports

Plans and intentions

Invitations

Description and comparison of two cities

Vacation plans

Personal problems

Offers of advice

Opinions of people

Routine activities

GRAMMAR:

Revision of tenses: present, past and future: perfect and non-perfect; simple and continuous: active and passive

Gerunds and infinitives

Narrative tenses: past simple and continuous

past perfect simple and continuous

Expressing quantity: mass and count nouns, few vs. a few, much and many, compounds with some and any.

Future time: will and going to, present simple and continuous, future continuous, future perfect

Description: relative clauses, present and past participles, modifying adverbs

Modal verbs of deduction: must, may, might, could, can't

Articles: a, an, the

VOCABULARY:

Parts of the body

Suffixes and prefixes

Compound nouns

Means of transport and their associations

Illnesses, symptoms and diagnoses

Adjectives describing personal characteristics

Compound adjectives

Describing objects: shape, material and color

Idiomatic expressions



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i) Issued by the Federal Education Council (CFE) / Ministry of Education (MEC):

**Document 1:** *Law no. 5692/71*, or "Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação" (Law of Directives and Bases for Education), CFE/MEC, 1971.

**Document 2:** *Resolution no.8/71* (Annexo to Law no 5692/71), CFE/MEC, 1971.

**Document 3:** *Opinion no. 853/71* ("Parecer"), CFE/MEC, 1971.

**Document 4:** *Directives for the Improvement of Teaching/Learning of the Portuguese Language* ("Diretrizes para o Aperfeiçoamento do Ensino/Aprendizagem da Língua Portuguesa"); National Committee Final Report, MEC, 1986.

**Document 5:** *Opinion no. 478/75*, CFE/MEC, 1975.

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ii) Issued by the State Education Council of Rio de Janeiro (CEE/RJ):

**Document 7:** *Opinion no. 232/82*, CEE/RJ, 1982.

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